Ali, the Well-Guarded Secret

Shii Islam: Texts and Studies

Ali, the Well-Guarded Secret

Figures of the First Master in Shiʿi Spirituality

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BRILL

To Maryam and Said Shaari,
my old travelling companions,
for their love of ʿAlī

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Contents

Notice to the Reader

Double dates indicate, first, the hijri date of Islam (h. = lunar hijri; h.s. = solar hijri) then that of the Common Era. When they appear between brackets after the name of an individual, they refer to the date of their death, unless indicated otherwise; e.g.: al-Ḥibarī (286/899) or (d.[i.e. died in] 286/899). When the month is not known, both years of the Common Era overlapped by the hijri year are indicated; e.g.: 329/940-41. Translations from the Quran are ours (we often however remain close to those of Arberry). As for the Quranic references, the first number refers to the surah whilst the second refers to the verse number according to the most usual division of the text; e.g.: 2:43 = Quran, surah 2, verse 43. The term ḥadith designates the second scriptural source of Islam after the Quran. It refers to what what is commonly called the Islamic Tradition, that is, for the Sunni, the teachings attributed to the prophet Muḥammad and to some of his Companions and, for the Shi‘i, those of the Prophet, his daughter Fāṭima, ‘Alī himself and the imams descended from him. It is written here with capital h (Hadith) when referring to the Islamic Tradition or the disciplines that belong to it; written with lowercase h (hadith) it refers to a specific tradition, teaching, or a specific saying. In Arabic onomastics, the name of an individual is almost always followed by that of his father. This filiation is marked by the letter "b.", short for "ibn" that is "son of"; e.g.: Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh = Muḥammad ibn (i.e. "son of") ‘Abdallāh.

Transcription System

Consonants: ' (indicates the hamza, rendering the soft laryngeal glottal stop), b, t, th (like the English "th" in *think*), j, ḥ ("h" unvoiced pharyngeal), kh (like the Spanish "jota" or the German "ch" of *Buch*), d, dh (like the English *that*), r (always a strongly rolled r), z, s, sh, ṣ (emphatic "s"), ḍ (emphatic "d"), ṭ (emphatic "t"), ẓ (emphatic "z"), ' (indicates the voiced pharyngeal 'ayn), gh (like the "r" in the French *grassayé*), f, q (velarized uvular stop, like a glottal "k"), k, l, m, n, w, h (laryngeal spirant), y (like in *yak*).

Vowels: short: a, i, u; long: ā, ū, ī.

The four additional Persian letters: p, č (like "ch" in *China*), ž (like the French "j"), g (as in *garden*).

Acknowledgements

Figures

Abbreviations

AI(U)ON	*Annali dell'Istituto (Universitario) Orientale di Napoli*
BEO	*Bulletin d'Études Orientales*
BIFAO	*Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*
BSL	*Bulletin de Société de Linguistique*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
EI2	*Encyclopédie de l'Islam,* 2nd edition
EI3	*Encyclopédie de l'Islam,* 3rd edition
Enc. Ir.	*Encyclopaedia Iranica*
EPHE	École Pratique des Hautes Études
EQ	*Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān*
GAL	Brockelmann, C., *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur,* Weimar, 1898
GAS	Sezgin, F., *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums,* Leiden, 1967-1985
IC	*Islamic Culture*
IJMES	*International Journal of Middle East Studies*
IOS	*Israel Oriental Studies*
JA	*Journal Asiatique*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*
JSAI	*Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
MIDEO	*Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales du Caire*
MW	*Muslim* (previously *Moslem*) *World*
REI	*Revue des Études Islamiques*
REMMM	*Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée*
RHR	*Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*
RSO	*Rivista degli Studi Orientali*
SI	*Studia Islamica*
SSR	*Shiʿi Studies Review*
St Ir	*Studia Iranica*
WZKM	*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*

Introduction

ʿAlī son of Abī Ṭālib is without any doubt one of the most important personalities of nascent Islam. First cousin and son-in-law to Muḥammad, the father of Muhammad's only male progeny and himself the fourth caliph, he is one of the most respected Companions of the Prophet in the eyes of all Muslims. It is however in Shiʿi Islam, the religion of the mystical cult of the figure of the Guide (*imām*), that ʿAlī is precisely the first Imam, father of all the others and the ideal man of God, that he acquires paramount importance, to the point that, for many, Shiʿism is the religion of devotion to ʿAlī and the other imams descended from him. As I have written elsewhere, Shiʿism is the religion of the imam just as Christianity is the religion of Christ, and ʿAlī is the imam *par excellence.*

In recent years hundreds of books and articles and even entire encyclopaedias about ʿAlī have appeared, written by Muslims and, of course, especially by Shiʿis. Nevertheless, apart from these works, admittedly very useful, but written from a confessional point of view, there is no comprehensive study applying critical historical and philological methodologies to the subject. The only such studies in existence confine themselves to the examination of specific aspects of this major figure of the history of Islam. The present short work seeks to at least partly fill that gap and to serve as an introduction to a wider, maybe collective, study.

There are several distinct aspects to the figure of ʿAlī, to which we will return later in this book, but one in particular led me to write it. It is that ʿAlī is the only figure among the 'Companions of Muḥammad' who has remained to this day the object of a veritable cult for hundreds of millions of the faithful. Apart from the more than 200 million Twelver, Ismaili or Zaydi Shiʿis for whom ʿAlī is the supreme symbol of the highest sanctity, there are millions of Bektashis and Turkish Alevis, ('followers of ʿAlī'), Syrian Alawis (a term with the same meaning), and Kurdish Ahl-e Ḥaqq/Yāresān, in addition to the millions of Sunni Sufis, notably in the Muslim East, for whom he represents, amongst other things, the source of their chains of mystical and initiatory transmission, as well as the figure of the perfect divine sage. For a large number of these Muslims, explicitly or occultly, ʿAlī is even superior to Muḥammad. Why? Where does this veritable devotion towards this figure, who therefore constitutes a unique case of its kind, come from? Many other Companions of Muḥammad occupy a central place in Muslim history or spirituality and yet none of them has, like ʿAlī, become the object of such persistent, widespread and fervent devotion. Even such a cardinal figure as ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb,

a father-in-law of Muhammad, the second caliph after him and celebrated as the artisan of the first Arab conquests and the foundation of the Muslim empire, never enjoyed such popularity.[1] And why precisely ʿAlī? This book seeks to provide some elements of a reply to that question.

Beyond the centuries-old positions and polemics, in particular between Sunnis and Shiʿis, the figure of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is thus particularly significant in the history of Muslim spirituality. I am speaking of the "figure" of ʿAlī and not of the historical personality, about whom almost nothing certain is known beyond the broad outlines of some major events. I will return to these subsequently. In an article now more than twenty five years old, Jacqueline Chabbi stressed the impossibility of writing a historical biography of Muḥammad, since the sources are late, contradictory, full of approximations and errors and theologically and politically biased, as they were written in times profoundly different from those of the Prophet and by diverging religious movements.[2] Harald Motzki, however, who is rather less sceptical of the Islamic sources, pinpoints the dilemma of historians who wish to write a life of Muḥammad: "On the one hand it is not possible to write a historical biography of the Prophet without being accused of using the sources uncritically, while on the other hand, when using the sources critically, it is simply not possible to write such a biography".[3]

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1   ʿUmar was considered, it seems, to be the eschatological Saviour by a certain number of believers, but the phenomenon was very short-lived; see P. Crone & M. Cook, *Hagarism. The Making of the Islamic World,* Cambridge (England), 1977, index p. 268 *sub* ʿUmar al-Fārūq and more particularly pp. 5 and 34; A. Hakim, "ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb, calife par la Grâce de Dieu", *Arabica* 54/3, 2008, pp. 317-336; Id., "ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb: l'autorité religieuse et morale", *Arabica* 55/1, 2008, pp. 1-34.

2   J. Chabbi, "Histoire et tradition sacrée. La biographie impossible de Mahomet ». *Arabica* 43 (1996), pp. 189-205. For less sceptical points of view, see also F.E. Peters, "The Quest of the Historical Muḥammad", *The International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23 (1991), pp. 291-315; G. Hagen, "The Imagined and the Historical Muḥammad", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 129/1 (2009), pp. 97-111; A. Görke, H. Motzki & G. Schoeler, "First Century Sources for the Life of Muhammad? A Debate", *Der Islam* 89/2 (2012), p. 2-59; for a synthesis of the methods and the impossibility of reaching the historical Muhammad see now S.J. Shoemaker, "Les vies de Muhammad", in M.A. Amir-Moezzi and G. Dye (dir.), *Le Coran des historiens*, Paris, 2019, vol. 1, pp. 183-245.

3   H. Motzki, "Introduction", in Id. (ed), *The Biography of Muḥammad: the Issue of the Sources*, Leiden, 2000, p. xiv. The multiple difficulties of establishing a historical life of Muḥammad are also presented, for example, in the collection of articles edited by T. Fahd, *La vie du prophète Mahomet* (Travaux du centre d'études supérieures specialisé d'histoire des religions de Strasbourg), Paris, 1983; in W. Raven, art. "Sīra", in *Encyclopédie de l'Islam, 2e éd. (E12), s.v.* and more recently in H. Ouardi, *Les derniers jours de Muḥammad,* Paris, 2016 that shows, with pertinence, the innumerable contradictions and inconsistencies in the official "biographies" of Muḥammad.

The personality of ʿAlī is no doubt just as problematic as Muḥammad's, if not more so. He is at the centre of gravity of three major historical issues as inseparable in their origins as in their subsequent consequences, which shaped the beginnings of Islam and have conditioned its destiny right up to the present: the problem of the succession of Muḥammad; the recurrent conflicts and civil wars between Muslims over the centuries; and finally the writing of the scriptural sources of Islam, the Quran and the Hadith.[4] The reserves made earlier over the sources which speak of Muḥammad can be equally applied *mutatis mutandis* to those touching on ʿAlī, with this one difference, that in the conflicts around ʿAlī and his entourage (for example his wife Fāṭima or his son al-Ḥusayn), the divide seems to have been even more violent.[5] The life of the historical ʿAlī appears to be lost in a whirlwind of conflicts that shook those early times and profoundly marked the first writings of Islam.[6] Be that as it may, it is nevertheless possible to write a history or histories of the differing representations of ʿAlī in the different Muslim circles. This book describes some aspects of the figure of ʿAlī in Shiʿi, and notably Twelver, spirituality.

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4   The articulation between these historical events is the subject of M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux et le Coran parlant. Sources scripturaires de l'islam entre histoire et ferveur,* Paris, 2011; Id., "Le shiʿisme et le Coran", in *Le Coran des historiens*, vol 1, pp. 919-967.

5   M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux, op. cit.,* chap. 1; W. Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the early Caliphate,* Cambridge, 1997, *passim;* id., "Social Legislation in Surat al-Ahzab", in A. Cilardo (ed), *Islam and Globalisation. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. Proceeding of the 25th Congress of l'Union Européenne des Islamisants et Arabisants,* Louvain-Paris-Walpole, 2013, pp. 197-203; Id. "Introduction" to "History and Historiography", in F. Daftary and G. Miskinzoda (ed), *The Study of Shīʿi Islam: History, Theology and Law,* London-New York, 2014, pp. 3-16; Jane Dammen McAuliffe, "Chosen of All Women: Mary and Fatima in Qurʾanic Exegesis", *Islamochristiana* 7 (1981), p. 19-28; B. Beinhauer-Köhler, *Fāṭima bint Muḥammad. Metamorphosen einer frühislamischen Frauengestalt,* Wiesbaden, 2002, pp. 39-56; V. Klemm, "Image formation of an Islamic legend. Fāṭima, the daughter of the prophet Muḥammad", in S. Günther (ed), *Ideas, images, and methods of portrayal. Insights into classical Arabic literature and Islam,* Leiden-Boston, 2005, p. 181-208 (especially p. 184-190); C.P. Clohessy, *Fāṭima, Daughter of Muḥammad,* Piscataway, 2013; see also D.K. Crow, "The Death of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī and Early Shiʿi Views of the Imamate", *Alserāt* 12 (1986), pp. 71-116 (included in E. Kohlberg (ed), *Shīʿism*, Aldershot, 2003, article n.3); T. Hylén, *Ḥusayn, the Mediator*, Uppsala, 2007.

6   As has always been stressed there is a plethora of works, even encyclopaedias, of the hagiographical and apologetical type on ʿAlī written by Muslim authors, but the critical history of the sources concerning him and of all the problems that they pose remains unwritten. In the present state of research the following excellent synthetic articles are useful: *EI2* (L. Veccia Vaglieri), the *Encylopaedia Iranica* (I. Poonawala and E. Kohlberg), the *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān* (A.S. Asani) or from *EI3* (2008-2, pp. 62 *sqq.* by R. Gleave), *s.n.*; the very long, multi-authored article in *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, vol.3, Leiden-Boston, 2011, pp. 477-583. See also the collective work: A.Y. Ocak (ed), *From History to Theology: ʿAlī in the Islamic Beliefs,* Ankara, 2005.

I will nevertheless first examine some "biographical" data on which the sources are more or less in agreement (which does not mean that they convey historical reality) by commenting on the enlightening syntheses that are mentioned above (footnote 6).

ʿAlī would seem to have been very young at the beginning of Muḥammad's prophetic career, although the chronology given in the sources is certainly not reliable. He grew up in the home of Muḥammad, his first cousin, because of the bankruptcy and poverty of his own father. One of the very first followers of Muḥammad, he would have joined him in Medina after the Hijra and married his daughter Fāṭima. She bore two sons to ʿAlī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, the sole male progeny of the Prophet and the two imams who succeeded ʿAlī, according to the majority of the partisans of the latter. One fact is so sufficiently rare as to be worthy of remark: while Fāṭima was alive, ʿAlī took no other spouse.

ʿAlī was by the side of Muḥammad in all his battles, often as the flag bearer or as the commander-in-chief. His bravery, his feats of arms and his warrior-like qualities became legendary. And yet, after the death of Muḥammad, he does not seem to have taken part in any further war of conquest. He would seem to be unique among the great Companions in having steered completely clear of those events so crucial to world history, the Arab conquests and the first gestation of the empire. It is one of the peculiarities of ʿAlī which baffles the historians. Some elements which I examine below may perhaps provide avenues for further research.

After the death of Muḥammad in the year 11/632 (according to the most accredited tradition), civil violence erupted around the question of his succession. ʿAlī, his wife Fāṭima and their two sons were at the centre of the conflicts.[7] Let us take a closer look. The fratricidal violence between the followers of Muḥammad seemed to be predictable, given that the precarious balance sustaining that assembly of heterogeneous groups and interests who were the new converts, depended, it would appear, upon the person of Muḥammad himself. He once gone, the Meccan Emigrants who had accompanied him on his Hijrah came into conflict with the Medinan Auxiliaries who had welcomed them. His quite recently and opportunistically converted former Qurayshi enemies, among them the influential Umayyad family, as well as his Companions Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, sought to impose themselves by neutralising by any means the ardour of the other competitors, and in particular the partisans of ʿAlī. The confrontations, although limited, for the time being at least, in both time and space, seem to have been very violent. Fāṭima, daughter of Muḥammad and wife of ʿAlī, is said to have died of injuries sustained in an attack against

7   On the following subjects see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux.*

her house, led by the henchmen of ʿUmar. After a tense meeting hosted by the Banū Sāʿida clan of the Auxiliaries, the conflicts came down to a dispute between Abū Bakr and ʿAlī in which the former quickly prevailed, to become the first caliph.

Of this episode, Islamic textual tradition has broadly speaking retained two radically different versions. The great majority of the religious sources derived from what eventually came be called Sunnism, the majority current of Islam who recognised the legitimacy of Abū Bakr, seem to have sought to attenuate or even conceal the violence of the confrontations and to present him as an almost consensual figure, in an attempt to limit the scope of the conflicts. Yet the historical and historiographical sources, even those of the Sunnis,[8] contain enough elements affirming the contrary to have led a majority of modern researchers to seriously doubt the alleged consensus of the faithful regarding the election of Abū Bakr and the presumed unity of the Companions of the Prophet.[9] According to most Sunni doctrinal works, the Prophet had not explicitly designated anyone to succeed him, either in his own declarations or via Quranic revelations (the "official" Quran that we know today contains no reference to that effect). His community would consequently have had recourse to those ancestral tribal practices that had always marked the succession of a charismatic leader among the Arabs: the designation, by a council of influential notables, of one of the closest companions of that leader, sufficiently aged to be considered wise and belonging to the same tribe as his predecessor or to a tribe allied with him. Abū Bakr fulfilled all those conditions and was thus elected, after the meeting with the Auxiliaries, with almost unanimous approval. The notable exception was ʿAlī, who finally also let himself be convinced of the wisdom of that choice, in his anxiety to safeguard the unity and peace of the community.

The partisans of ʿAlī, who was apparently very young at the time (which according to some constituted a handicap), known as Alids or proto-Shiʿis, give an entirely different version of events. According to Shiʿi sources, Muḥammad had explicitly designated ʿAlī as his sole legitimate successor and this repeatedly so. Even more decisively, God himself, through his revelation had announced

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8   E.g. Ibn Hishām, al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī or even Ibn Shabba; however the silence of Ibn Saʿd on the conflicts is in this regard significant (see bibliography at the end of this volume).

9   As has been stressed, the question of the sources concerning the death of the Prophet and the events that followed immediately is very complex. About practically every sequence of different episodes there are multiple, sometimes very diverging, narratives depending on the theological and political orientation of the authors. Scientific research has long studied those sources and the related bibliography is plethoric. Seeking to avoid erudite discussion at this level we only offer here a concise summary of the most plausible theses.

this succession. According to the Alids-Shiʿis, it could not be otherwise: how could God and his Messenger have left the crucial question of the latter's succession unresolved? Is it conceivable that they would have been so indifferent to the leadership of the community of the faithful as to leave it in uncertainty and confusion? This would be contrary to the very spirit of the Quran, according to which the great prophets of the past have chosen their successors from among the elders of their closest family members, those privileged by the bonds of blood and initiated into the secrets of their religion. It is true that the Quran advises that a council be held in certain cases, but never when it comes to the succession of the prophets which must always be decided by divine election. The Alid-Shiʿi sources, notably those of the first Hijra centuries, maintain that the original integral Quran, containing many explicit mentions of and clear allusions to, the members of Muhammad's family and notably designating ʿAlī as his successor, had been falsified, heavily censored and profoundly distorted by the adversaries of ʿAlī who usurped power after the Prophet's death. Likewise, this integral Quran, far more voluminous than the Quran as we now know it, explicitly cited the names of the adversaries of Muḥammad and ʿAlī, who had belatedly and opportunely converted to Islam. To remove him from the succession to the Prophet, these enemies who in the end prevailed were forced to delete all those passages and to deny at the same time the authenticity of the prophetic statements concerning the election of his son-in-law.[10]

ʿAlī was thus excluded from power during the reigns of the first three caliphs, Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān. The latter was assassinated by other faithful, as were many figures of early Islam, after a rather chaotic reign and in what the sources call the first civil war between Muslims and in which some supporters of ʿAlī were also involved. ʿAlī, the fourth caliph, thus came to power in an atrocious climate of extreme fratricidal violence. His short five year reign (from 35/656 to 40/661) was marked by a series of major civil wars: the battle of the Camel, against a coalition led by ʿĀʾisha (widow of Muḥammad and daughter of Abū Bakr) and other Companions; the battle of Ṣiffīn against the Umayyads, led by Muʿāwiya, a war that was ended by an arbitration; and the battle of Nahrawān against the Kharijis, former partisans of ʿAlī, who became his worst enemies over their refusal to accept arbitration of Ṣiffīn. ʿAlī was finally be assassinated by one of them in 40/661.[11]

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10   On the question of the Quran and its falsification according to Shiʿis see now E. Kohlberg & M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification. The Kitāb al-qirāʾāt of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Sayyārī*, Leiden-Boston, 2009, Introduction; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 2.

11   See also H. Lammens, *Études sur le règne du Calife Omaiyade Moʿâwia Ier*, Paris, 1908; L. Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam*, Milano, 1905-1926 (the last two volumes – IX and X dating

It is very difficult to form a clear idea of the personality of the historical ʿAlī, as the sources concerning him are tendentious and contradictory, and with good reason; as Laura Veccia Vaglieri writes (see above footnote 6): "ʿAlī was at the centre of struggles that have lasted for centuries". We have, on the one hand, hagiographical and apologetic Shiʿi writings that from the earliest times portray him as a legendary figure and as an exceptional being with superhuman qualities. On the other hand, after the Umayyad period, whose rare textual remnants give of ʿAlī, their hereditary enemy, a particularly negative image, the Abbassid sources downplay the Shiʿi image of ʿAlī, in an attempt to recuperate him by making of him a Companion of the Prophet particularly worthy of respect, but otherwise similar to the others, without being in any way uniquely superior to them.[12]

Nevertheless, many different sources are unanimous about some aspects of his character: his bravery (as we have seen), his eloquence both in prose and in poetry (a collection of poems of very uncertain authenticity is attributed to him), his excellent knowledge of the Quran and of the prophetic Sunna, not least in his insistence on the duty of putting them into practice, and finally, his ascetic and chivalrous spirit. These qualities are partly evident in the voluminous collection entitled *Nahj al-balāgha* that is attributed to him. It is a sort of anthology of letters, words of wisdom, advice, aphorisms, sermons, eschatological predictions and speeches of different kinds, whose attribution to ʿAlī has been under discussion ever since the Middle Ages. It is true that the book was compiled by the Shiʿi savant al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1016), well after the time of ʿAlī and in the particular context of the Buyid government (I shall come back to this in due course). The Sunnis Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1283) or al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) consider that the compiler is also its author, whereas the Muʿtazili Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd (d. 656/1258), one of the greatest commentators on this book,

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from 1926 – are dedicated to ʿAlī and his caliphate); E. Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwīya in Early Arabic Tradition*, Copenhagen, 1964. It is interesting to note that these richly documented studies, now considered classics, say almost nothing about the spiritual figure of ʿAlī or the religious dimension of the conflicts related to him. This remark also seems valid for other, less monographic, studies. My own works and those of W. Madelung referenced above (see notes 4 and 5) seek, amongst other things, to fill that gap; see on this subject J. van Reeth, "*Le Coran silencieux et le Coran parlant:* nouvelles perspectives sur les origines de l'islam", *RHR* 230/3 (July and September 2013), p. 385-402; M. Terrier, "Violences politiques, écritures canoniques et évolutions doctrinales en islam", *JSAI* 40 (2013), pp. 401-427.

12   See now N. Husayn, "The Rehabilitation of ʿAlī in Sunnī Ḥadīth and Historiography", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 29.4 (2019), pp. 565–583; For positions hostile to ʿAlī in Islam see now id., *Opposing the Imām. The Legacy of the* Nawāṣib *in Islamic Literature*, Cambridge, 2021.

opts categorically for its authenticity.[13] Again Laura Veccia Vaglieri, one of the foremost specialists on the subject, considers that an ancient core of the texts can reasonably be attributed to ʿAlī, given that, since after the end of the 1st century Hijra and up to the time of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, many famous authors belonging to all kinds of denominations quote a significant number of sermons and aphorisms of ʿAlī as proofs of his eloquence and of his superior spiritual and moral qualities.[14] However the Italian scholar concedes that it is very difficult to distinguish what is authentic from what is apocryphal in the collection. In any event, both the overwhelming majority, both of cultivated Muslims of all times and of modern scholars are unanimous in attributing the compilation to al-Raḍī and in considering the work as a masterpiece of Arabic prose and moral reflection.[15] The commentaries on it, and its translations into different Islamic languages, can be counted by the hundreds. Al-ʿĀmilī, in his monograph on this subject, mentions 210 titles up to 1983 alone. From that date to the present, one must add many hundreds more.[16] As for the Shiʿi faithful, they believe in the authenticity of the attribution of the *Nahj al-balāgha* to ʿAlī and thence consider this book to be sacred. However, for the historian of Shiʿi thought primarily interested in the original esoteric tradition and its extensions – which I am – this source must be approached with prudence and above all parsimony. The reason for this is quite simply the affiliation of its

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13　M. Djebli, "Nahdj al-Balāgha", *EI2*.

14　L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Observations sur le Nahj al-balāgha", *Actes du 24e Congrès International des Orientalistes*, Munich, 1957, pp. 318-339; and ead., "Sul ʿNahj al-Balāgha' et sul suo compilatore ash-Sharīf ar-Raḍī", *AIUON*, special number 8, 1958. On the apocryphal character of certain parts of the book see also W. al-Kāḍī, "An early Faṭimid political document", *SI* 48, 1978, pp. 71-108.

15　See for example. Z. Mubarak, *La prose arabe*, Paris, 1931, pp. 27 *sqq.*, 128 *sqq.*, 185 *sqq.*; R. Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe*, Paris, 1952-1966, vol. 2, pp. 308 *sqq.*, vol. 3, pp. 721 *sqq.*; M. Djebli, "Encore à propos de l'authenticité du *Nahj al-balāgha*", *SI* 75, 1992, pp. 33-56. On the prose attributed to ʿAlī see now the many monographic works of Tahera Qutbuddin, in particular: "The Sermons of ʿAli ibn Abi Talib: At the Confluence of the Core Islamic Teachings of the Qurʾan and the Oral, Nature-Based Cultural Ethos of Seventh Century Arabia", in Linda G. Jones (ed.), *La predicación medieval: sermones cristianos, judios e islámicos en el Mediterráneo*, special number of *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 42/1 (2012), pp. 201–228; Id., "ʿAlī's Contemplations on This World and the Hereafter in the Context of His Life and Times", in A. Korangy et al. (eds.), *Essays in Islamic Philology, History, and Philosophy*, Berlin, 2016, pp. 333-353; Id., "A Sermon on Piety by Imam ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib: How the Rythm of the Classical Arabic Oration Tacitly Persuaded" in S. Dorpmüller, J. Scholz, M. Stille, I. Weinrich (eds.), *Religion and Aesthetic Experience*, Heidelberg, 2018, pp. 109-123.

16　Ḥ. Al-ʿĀmilī, *Shurūḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, Beirut, 1983; also M. Ḥusaynī, *Maṣādir Nahj al-balāgha*, Najaf, 1966, vol. 1, pp. 247-314. See now *Nahj al-balāgha wa shurūḥuh*, Maktabat al-imām ʿAlī Amīr al-muʾminīn, Najaf, 2016.

compiler, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, to the staunchest theologico-juridical rationalist tradition of the Buyid period, well known for its opposition, if not outright hostility, to the original tradition mentioned above.[17]

The Alids/Shi'is consider 'Alī to be the sole legitimate successor of Muḥammad, notably because his privileged relationship with God and with the Prophet. Well beyond its political significance, this succession has undeniably a profoundly religious aspect. For reasons that the following chapters will attempt to demonstrate, from very early on, perhaps even during his lifetime, 'Alī seems to have been transmuted, in the eyes of his followers, from a historical actor into a heroic figure of quasi divine stature, at the very centre of what many ancient sources call the "religion of 'Alī" (*dīn 'Alī*).[18] As a man inspired by God, depository of all kinds of knowledge, Proof of God (*ḥujjat allāh*), he soon acquires an eschatological dimension: arbitrator (*qasīm*) on Judgement Day, intercessor with God (*shafī*) or also cupbearer (*sāqī*) of the paradisiac pool of Kawthar in the Afterlife. For the entire Shi'i imamology and metaphysics, in the main currents such as Twelver Imamism (the main branch of Shi'ism) and Sevener Ismailism as well as in the so-called "extremist" (*ghulāt*) sects, 'Alī became the theophanic figure *par excellence*, the manifestation of the Names of God or the incarnation of a celestial 'Alī, supreme symbol of the divinity; and this still holds true today.[19] It is no doubt for these reasons that 'Alī's declaration of the divine alliance, his *walāya*, becomes from very early on the third

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17   On the two traditions and their conflict see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin dans le shī'isme originel*, Paris-Lagrasse, 1992, Introduction; on the position of al-Raḍī, *ibid.*, pp. 57 et 69; also M.A. Amir-Moezzi & Ch. Jambet, *Qu'est-ce que le shī'isme?*, Paris, 2006, parts 2 and 3; S.M.M. Ja'farī, *Sayyid Raḍī*, Tehran, 1378 solar/1998 (2nd ed.), especially chap. 9.

18   Gh. Ḥ. Ṣadīqī, *Jonbesh hā-ye dīnī-ye īrānī dar qarn hā-ye dovvom va sevvom-e hejrī* (completed and updated version of the author's doctoral thesis: G.H. Sadighi, *Les mouvements religieux iraniens aux IIe et IIIe siècles de l'hégire*, Paris, 1938), Tehran, 1372 solar/1993, pp. 225 *sqq.*; E. Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī Shī'ī Views on the *ṣaḥāba*", *JSAI* 5 (1984), pp. 143-175, especially p. 145 sqq. (now in id., *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shī'ism*, Aldershot, 1991, article no. 9); on *dīn 'Alī* see here chap. 3. L. Veccia Vaglieri thinks that he owes his "semi-divine aura" to the profoundly religious spirit of 'Alī and to his social and economic reforms of his caliphate, during which he distributed, to the point of their exhaustion, the resources of the state's *bayt al-māl* (*EI2*, p. 393b et 397a). But, in view of the portrait of 'Alī which will emerge from the corpus of documents that we are about to examine, the argument does not appear sufficient.

19   See E. Kohlberg, art. "'Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb, ii. 'Alī as seen by the community "Among extremist Shi'ites"", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 1, pp. 845-846; see also for example. H. Halm, *Die islamische Gnosis. Die Extreme Schia und die 'Alawiten*, Zurich-Munich, 1982; M.M. Bar-Asher & A. Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-'Alawī Religion: An Enquiry into its Theology and Liturgy*, Leiden, 2002; D. de Smet, *Les Épîtres sacrées des Druzes: Rasā'il al-Ḥikma*, Louvain, 2007, introduction; and here chap. 4.

element of the Shi'i profession of faith, after those of the divine unicity and of the prophetic mission of Muḥammad.[20]

One finds a great number of these terms describing the figure of ʿAlī in Sufism, obviously in Shiʿi Sufism but also in Sunni Sufism, in the great Muslim philosophers, as well as in the important pan-Islamic "chivalric" movement of the guilds and in the companies of artisans known since the Middle Ages as *futuwwa*. To this movement ʿAlī is the *sayyid al-fityān* ("master of the companion-knights"); the cry of *'futuwwa'* is said to have been uttered by the divine voice during the battle of Uḥud: *lā fatā illā ʿAlī lā sayfa illā dhū l-faqār* ("no knight but ʿAlī, no sword but Dhū l-faqār").[21] Finally, emphasis must be placed on the central place of ʿAlī in what is known as "popular" Shiʿism, where he is an object of veritable devotion as the holy man *par excellence*, the master of all miracles, the hero of battles against miscreants and against all sorts of demons, the hero of many popular epics and the main character of a number of Shiʿi religious plays known as *taʿziya*.[22] We shall of course be returning to many of these subjects in the following pages.

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20   J. Eliash, "On the Genesis and Development of the Twelver-Shīʿī Three-Tenet *shahada*", *Der Islam* 47, 1971, pp. 265-272; See also the great monography on the subject of Sayyid ʿAlī Shahrastānī, *Mawsūʿat al-adhān bayn al-aṣāla wa l-taḥrīf*.

21   Concerning Sufism see E. Kohlberg, art. "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭāleb, ii. ʿAlī as seen by the community, "Among Sufis"", op. cit., pp. 846-847; see also R. Gramlich, *Die schiitischen Derwischorden Persiens*, Wiesbaden, 1965-1981, especially vol. 1, pp. 13-26; K.M. al-Shaybī, *Al-ṣila bayn al-taṣawwuf wa l-tashayyuʿ*, Baghdad, 1966; H. Corbin, *En islam iranien. Aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, Paris, 1971-1972, especially vol. 3 (subheading: *Les fidèles d'amour. Shîʿisme et soufisme*); and now D. Hermann & M. Terrier (eds.), *Shiʿi Islam and Sufism. Classical Views and Modern Perspectives*, London, 2020. On *futuwwa* and the moral figure of ʿAlī, see especially F. Taeschner, *Zünfte und Bruderschaften im Islam: Texte zur Geschichte der Futuwwa*, Zurich-Munich, 1979 (the *opus magnum* of the author that sums up and completes his many previous works on *futuwwa*); A. Mīr-ʿĀbedīnī et M. Afshārī, *Āyīn-e qalandarī*, Téhéran, 1374/1995, index. s.n. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib; M. Ali Lakhani (ed.), *The sacred foundations of justice in Islam: the Teachings of ʿAli ibn Abi Talib*, Bloomington, 2006, (volume composed of A. Lakhani, "The Metaphysics of Human Governance: Imam ʿAli, Truth and Justice"; R. Shah-Kazemi, "A Sacred Conception of Justice: Imam ʿAli's Letter to Malik al-Ashtar"; L. Lewisohn, "ʿAli b. Abi Talib's ethics of mercy in the mirror of the Persian Sufi tradition"); R. Shah-Kazemi, *Justice and Remembrance. Introducing the Spirituality of Imam Ali*, London, 2006; L. Ridgeon, *Jawānmardī: A Sufi Code of Honour*, Edinburgh, 2011, index s.v.; Id. (ed.), *Javanmardi. The Ethics and Practice of Persianate Perfection*, London, 2018; and in particular in that volume: R.Y. Shani, *"La Fata illa ʿAli la Sayf illa Dhu'l-Faqar*: Epigraphic Ceramic Platters from Medieval Nishapur Documenting Esteem for ʿAli ebn Abi Taleb as the Ideal *Fata*", pp. 28-65; the fascicle 40/1 (2013) of *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* is mostly devoted to *futuwwa*. See also here the contribution of O. Mir-Kasimov (Appendix 1). On the figure of ʿAlī among the philosophers see here the contribution of M. Terrier (Appendix 2).

22   E. Kohlberg, art. "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭāleb, ii. ʿAlī as seen by the community, "In popular thought"", *op. cit.*, pp. 843-844; see M.R. Shafīʿī Kadkanī, "Ḥemāseyī shīʿī az qarn-e panjom", *Majalle-ye*

As I have already stated, the present book is neither a work on the historical figure of ʿAlī, nor even on all the aspects of his spiritual nature. These subjects are too vast and can only be studied adequately in a collective manner. In the following chapters only certain aspects of the significance of the first Imam in the spirituality of Shiʿism, and in particular of Twelver Imami Shiʿism, will be examined. The contents of these chapters have already been published as articles in scientific journals or in collective academic publications. Here they have been updated, augmented where appropriate and slightly modified and articulated so that they together form a coherent book.

The work is divided into three sections. The first, entitled "Singularities of ʿAlī" consists of three chapters. The first is a study of the connections that link ʿAlī to the Quran. In it are examined respectively his roles as author and as the subject of the exegesis of Revelation, then as the content and the ultimate object of it. This dual dimension stresses the double nature, human and divine, of ʿAlī. It is for that reason that the study ends with the hypothesis of the possible identification, by certain proto-Shiʿis and their interpretation of a certain number of texts, of their first Imam with Christ.[23] The second chapter can be summed up in a syllogism: Muḥammad came primarily in order to announce the imminent end of world; he belonged to a biblical culture; he thus certainly announced the coming of the Messiah (if the conclusion of the syllogism is expressed in this form it is because the Quran, contrary to the Hadith, never speaks of the Messiah as the Saviour at the end of time). However, in the earlier traditions of the Hadith, this Messiah is Jesus and, in a certain number of Shiʿi texts, ʿAlī is the new manifestation of Jesus and thus the eschatological Saviour.[24] The third chapter focuses on an *a priori* unusual expression that

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Dāneshkade-ye Adabiyyāt va ʿOlūm-e Ensānīye Mashhad, 33th year, no 3-4 (autumn-winter 1379/2000), pp. 425-491; the introduction of Ḥ. Esmāʿīlī to his edition of the *Abū Muslim Nāmeh*, Tehran, 2001; the introduction of the editor to Rabīʿ (sic), *ʿAlī Nāmeh*, ed. R. Bayāt-Gholāmī, Tehran, 2010; E. Rossi and A. Bombaci, *Elenco di drammi religiosi persiani (fondo mss. Vaticani Cerulli)*, Vatican, 1961, index *s.n.* ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. See here chap. 9.

23 "'ʿAlī et le Coran (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine XIV)", *Revues des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 98.4 (Oct.-Dec. 2014), pp. 669-704 (published also in A. Straface, C. De Angelo & A. Manzo (éds), *Labor Limae. Atti in onore di Carmela Baffioni. Studi Magrebini*, Nuova Serie vol. XII-XIII, Naples 2014-2015 – in fact 2018 –, tome 1, pp. 1-39).

24 "Muḥammad le Paraclet et ʿAlī le Messie. Nouvelles remarques sur les origines de l'islam et de l'imamologie shiʿite" under the direction of M.A. Amir-Moezzi, co-edited with M. De Cillis, D. de Smet and O. Mir-Kasimov, *L'ésotérisme shiʿite, ses racines et ses prolongements / Shiʿi Esotericism, its Roots and Developments*, Turnhout (Belgium), 2016, pp. 19-54 (English translation: "Muḥammad the Paraclet and ʿAlī the Messiah: New Remarks on the Origins of Islam and of Shiʿite Imamology", *Der Islam* 95.1, 2018, pp. 30-64).

appears in a significant number of ancient sources, namely "the religion of ʿAlī" (*dīn ʿAlī*). In what way is it distinct from the "religion of Muḥammad", which will in the end be called "islam"? What are its characteristics? Why was this expression only applied to ʿAlī? The answer to this question implicitly reveals the special significance of the figure of the first Imam amongst the great personalities surrounding Muḥammad.[25]

The second section consists of four chapters and is entitled "Between the Divine and the Human". Its first chapter, the fourth chapter of the book, examines different aspects of Shiʿi theology of the Imam, of which ʿAlī is the supreme symbol. The esoteric and mystical aspects of this theology are based on the figure of the Imam as the locus of manifestation of the Names and Attributes of God.[26] In chapter 5 the fivefold constitution of the spirit of the Imam is analysed. This notion, inherited no doubt from many biblical traditions of late Antiquity, the last of them being Manicheism, stresses the presence of the "holy spirit" or of the "spirit of sanctity" (*rūḥ al-quds*) as the superior organ of the 'intellective limbs' of the divine man. It enables him to receive revelations from God, in other words to possess the spiritual abilities of a prophet in the biblical sense of the term.[27] The following chapter examines some special characteristics of the reception of divine revelation by the Imam, in particular during that holy night *par excellence* of the Muslim calendar, the "Night of Power" or "the Night of the Decree" (*laylat al-qadr*), which gave its name to Surah 97 of the Quran.[28] Chapter 7 shows how belief in the continuity of prophecy through the Imam becomes problematic with the establishment of the orthodox dogma of the "end of prophecy" after the death of Muḥammad. The chapter thus studies the relation between two major notions

25   "Considérations sur l'expression Dīn ʿAlī. Aux origines de la foi shiʿite", in *ZDMG* 150/1 (2000), pp. 29-68. This article has been included in my book *La religion discrète. Croyances et pratiques spirituelles dans l'islam shiʿite*, Paris, 2006 (2015²), chap. 1. For obvious reasons this study could not be absent from a book dedicated to the spiritual figure of ʿAlī.

26   "Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine I: remarques sur la divinité de l'Imam", in *Studia Iranica*, XXV (2), 1996, pp. 193-216. This article became chapter 3 of *La religion discrète*. As with the study cited in the previous footnote, the presence of this study in the present volume seemed to me to be indispensable.

27   "Les Cinq Esprits de l'homme divin (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine XIII)", *Der Islam* 92.2 (2015), pp. 297-320 (also published in *Gnose et manichéisme. Entre les oasis d'Égypte et la Route de la Soie. Hommage à Jean-Daniel Dubois*, A. van den Kerchove & L.G. Soares Santoprete (eds.), Turnhout, 2017, pp. 377-398; abbreviated version: "Les cinq membres intellectifs de l'homme de Dieu entre l'Antiquité tardive et l'islam shiʿite", *Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, April-June 2015 II, pp. 609-625).

28   "La Nuit du Qadr (Coran, sourate 97) dans le shiʿisme ancien (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine XV)", *MIDEO* 31 (2016), pp. 181-204.

of Shiʿi religion, that of "keeping the secret" (*taqiyya*) and that of the "sealing of prophecy" (*khatm al-nubuwwa*). Islamic "orthodoxy", as just stated, interpreted this expression from the Quran 33:40 to mean "the end of prophecy", which in turn implied that nobody could receive the Divine Word after the death of Muḥammad, and in effect making Islam the last religion. The Shiʿis, just like some other believers in the first centuries of Islam, have not adhered to this dogma. For them, revelation could not end. It had continued thanks to the Imams, and more particularly to ʿAlī, but, since the sometimes violent imposition of Sunni orthodoxy, they had been compelled for reasons of prudence to dissimulate their continuing adherence to the doctrine.[29]

The third and last section, "Spiritual Horizons", consists of two chapters. It examines the spreading of the cult of ʿAlī among his devotees, first towards the end of the Middle-Ages and at the dawn of modern times, then during the contemporary period. Chapter 8 is devoted to the birth of a veritable mystical religion of the figure of the first Imam, thanks to the work of a major thinker of late Imami mysticism, al-Ḥāfiẓ Rajab al-Bursī (d. after 813/1410-1411), and in particular through an analysis of what can be considered his Quranic exegesis.[30] The last chapter of the book examines the spiritual role of the icon in modern and contemporary Shiʿi Sufism. It shows how painted "portraits" of saints, in particular icons of ʿAlī, serve as a medium of contemplation and as means of interiorizing the figure of the Imam among even the illiterate communities of the faithful.[31] For many centuries, ʿAlī has thus satisfied the most sublime spiritual aspirations of the hearts of believers, whether it be, in the scholarly

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29 "Dissimulation tactique (*taqiyya*) et scellement de la prophétie (*khatm al-nubuwwa*) (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine XII)", *Journal Asiatique* 302.2 (2014), pp. 411-438 (English translation: "New Remarks on Secrecy and Concealment in Early Imāmī Shiʿism: the Case of *khatm al-nubuwwa* – Aspects of Twelver Shiʿi Imamology XII", in Sh. Raei (ed.), *Islamic Alternatives. Non-Mainstream Religion in Persianate Societies*, Göttinger Orientforschungen Iranica, Neue Folge 16, Wiesbaden, 2017, pp. 3-27).

30 "*Al-Durr al-Thamīn* attribué à Rajab al-Bursī. Un exemple des 'commentaires coraniques personnalisés' shiʿites (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine XVI)", *Le Muséon* 130 (1-2), 2017, pp. 207-240 (also published in Iyas Hassan (ed.), *La littérature aux marges du Adab. Regards croisés sur la prose arabe classique*, Paris, 2017, pp. 218-266).

31 "Icône et contemplation: entre l'art populaire et le soufisme dans le shiʿisme imamite (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine XI)", *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, University of Michigan, New Series/vol. 20, 2006 [in fact 2010], pp. 1-12 (published also in H. Biesterfeldt and V. Klemm (eds.), *Differenz und Dynamik im Islam. Festschrift für Heinz Halm zum 70. Geburtstag*, Würzburg, 2012, pp. 473-490 and updated in C. Altini, Ph. Hoffmann and J. Rüpke (eds.), *Issues of Interpretation. Texts, Images, Rites*, Stuttgart, 2018, pp. 87-103. English translation: "Icon and Meditation: Between Popular Art and Sufism in Imami Shiʿism", in P. Khosronejad (ed.), *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shiʿism. Iconography and Religious Devotion in Shiʿi Islam*, London-New York, 2012, pp. 25-45).

tradition, through the intellectual and philosophical journey of the educated, or in so-called "popular" religion, where the Sufi brotherhoods are particularly present.

The book concludes with the contributions of two friends and colleagues whom I wholeheartedly wish to thank. The first, Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, researcher at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, examines, with pertinence and erudition, the figure of ʿAlī in mystical and messianic circles from the v/xith to the x/xvith centuries. The second, Mathieu Terrier, researcher at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, studies, thoroughly and with finesse, the presence of ʿAlī in Islamic philosophy, with particular focus on Shiʿi philosophers.

PART 1

Singularities of ʿAlī

∵

ʿAlī and the Quran

To Carmela Baffioni
In friendly hommage

∵

1 Introduction

"'Alī is inseparable from the Quran just as the Quran is inseparable from ʿAlī."[1] This prophetic tradition, expressed here in its simplest form, has come down to us through Sunni sources. But it is of course also to be found, with many variations, in innumerable Shiʿi documents. It perfectly encapsulates the perception that the Alids (in the sense of the followers of ʿAlī) in general and the Imami Shiʿis in particular have of the privileged character of the relations that bind the Holy Book to their first imam.

Overall, in Shiʿism, the Quran and the prophetic holy family are indissolubly linked, as the celebrated prophetic tradition of the 'Two Precious Objects' (literally "The Two Weighty Things", *ḥadīth al-thaqalayn*) illustrates. This hadith, attributed to the prophet Muhammad himself, has come down to us in numerous variants and is accepted by both Sunnis and Shiʿis, although, of course, their interpretations of it differ. It in substance declares that Muhammad is bequeathing to his community "Two Precious" inseparable "Objects", namely his Family and the Book of God.[2] This prophetic saying thus establishes an organic relationship between both objects, and for some even, an equal sanctity, at the core of Islam's spiritual economy. The identity of the Quran being

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1   *ʿAlī maʿa l-Qurʾān wa l-Qurʾān maʿa ʿAlī* … (literally: "'Alī is with the Quran and the Quran is with ʿAlī"); al-Ṭabarānī Sulaymān b. Aḥmad, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaghīr*, vol. 1, ed. ʿA. Muḥammad, Medina, 1388/1968, p. 255; al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, *al-Mustadrak ʿalā l-ṣaḥīḥayn*, vol. 3, Haydarabad (reprint Riyad), s.d., p. 124.

2   The complete list of all the known sources of this hadith is now available in the collective anonymous work: *Kitāb allāh wa ahl al-bayt fī ḥadīth al-thaqalayn*, Qumm, reprint 1388/2009; see also M.M. Bar-Asher *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shiism*, Leiden, 1999, pp. 93-98; Id., "Shiʿism and the Qurʾān", in J.D. MacAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, s.v.; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, pp. 101 sqq.

manifest, each great politico-religious tendency in nascent Islam tried to recuperate the identity of the second element, the "prophetic Family", for its own profit, then expressing it, however, in different ways: *'itra* (family, parents), *ahl al-bayt* (People of the House), *āl al-rasūl* (Family of the Messenger), *āl al-nabī* (Family of the Prophet) ... Even the Ummayyads, descended from the Banū 'Abd Shams, the hereditary enemies of Muhammad's people, the Banū Hāshim, claimed the title for a while, but the claim was rapidly relinquished after their fall. For some among the first Sunnis, although interpretations vary, the formula was taken to mean either the wives of the Prophet or the community of believers, that is, the entire Islamic community (although the latter contradicts the letter and the spirit of the more generally accepted version of the hadith, that the Two Objects are bequeathed to the community and are thus distinct from it). Finally, common sense prevailing, most Sunnis concluded that the 'Family of Muḥammad' overall refers either to the whole Banū Hāshim, – and this interpretation was sustained by all the members of that clan, and in particular the Abbassids – or, in a more restricted sense, to the immediate family of Muḥammad, namely his daughter Fāṭima, his son-in-law and cousin 'Alī and their two sons, al-Ḥasan et al-Ḥusayn, the sole male offspring of the Prophet, and to the imams descended from them. This more restricted interpretation had always been sustained by the proto-Shi'i Alids and later by Shi'is of all tendencies.[3] Furthermore, as I will show below, there exists in Shi'ism a dialectical relationship linking the Imam, believed to be the living Word of God, i.e. the "speaking Quran", with the Quran, the written Word of God and "silent Guide".

'Alī is of crucial significance in these relationships between the holy Book and the Imams of the holy Family of the Prophet. In the traditions that link the first Imam to the Quran, three distinct, yet inseparable "moments" are to be distinguished: 'Alī as the inspired interpreter of the Book; the allusions of the Quran to 'Alī; and the explicit mentions of him therein.

2   'Alī the Master of Hermeneutics

First of all, 'Alī is the exegete *par excellence* of the divine Word. His role as a major authority on the Quran is also recognized in Sunnism, but it takes on

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3   For discussions of the different meanings given to the expression "Prophetic Family" in early Islam see M. Sharon, "Ahl al-bayt – People of the House", *JSAI* 8 (1986), pp. 169-184; Id., "The Umayyads as ahl al-bayt", *JSAI* 14 (1991), pp. 115-152; W. Madelung, *Succession to Muḥammad*, introduction; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Considérations sur l'expression *dīn 'Alī*", pp. 39-51 (= *La Religion discrète*, pp. 28-37); here chap. 3.

a crucial doctrinal dimension in Shiʿism.[4] From its most ancient texts Shiʿism defines itself as a hermeneutic doctrine derived from the teachings of the *imam/walī* (the Friend or Ally of God).[5] His essential function is to reveal the hidden meaning(s) of the Revelation. Without the commentaries and the explanations of the *walī*, the Scripture revealed by the prophet (*nabī*) remains obscure and its profundities are misunderstood. ʿAlī, the greatest of the Allies of God, is therefore the undisputed master of hermeneutics.

> ʿAlī proclaimed: "Ask me before you lose me! Through God's agency, at the revelation (*tanzīl*) of each verse, the Messenger of God recited it to me so that I would recite it to him in turn and I was given understanding of the interpretation of its hidden meaning (*taʾwīl*)".[6]

In one of the sermons attributed to him, ʿAlī, the imam and hence exegete *par excellence*, declares:

> [...] This light by which one is guided, this Quran which you have asked to speak and will not speak: it is I who will inform you about it, about what

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4   L. Veccia Vaglieri, "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib", *EI2*, vol. 1, p. 393a and 396b; I.K. Poonawala, "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, i. life", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 1, p. 843a and E. Kohlberg, "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, ii. ʿAlī as seen by the community", p. 843b; A.S. Asani, "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, vol. 1, p. 63.

5   The terms *walī* and *walāya*, the latter defining the status of the former, roughly speaking 'imam' and 'imamate', are of crucial significance to Shiʿi Islam. The doctrinal meaning of the latter word is complex: succinctly put, *walāya* means, first, the alliance with, or closeness of, the imam to God and thence his status and function; then the alliance with or love of the Shiʿi faithful for their imam and/or their fellow-believers; and, finally, the theological nature of the figure of the imam as the 'locus' of the manifestation of the Names of God. On this subject see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Notes à propos de la *walāya* imamite (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine X)", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122/4 (2002), pp. 722-741 (= *La Religion discrète*, chap. 7); M. Massi Dakake, *The Charismatic Community: Shiʿite Identity in Early Islam*, Albany, 2007, passim. N. Haider, *The Origins of the Shīʿa: Identity, Ritual and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century Kūfa*, Cambridge, 2011, index, *s.v.*

6   *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*, (3 vols), ed. M.B. al-Anṣārī al-Zanjānī al-Khūʾīnī, Qumm, 1426/1995, tradition no. 31, vol. 2, p. 802; see also al-Ṭūsī, *Amālī*, vol. 2, Qumm, 1993, p. 136; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, (110 vols), Tehran Qumm, 1376-1392/1956-1972, vol. 40, p. 186. Regarding the couple *tanzīl/taʾwīl*, the revelation of Scripture and the quest for its hidden meaning, Daniel Gimaret translates them by "la lettre" (the letter) and "l'esprit" (the spirit) of the Quran, using the famous Paulinian couple (see Shahrastānī, *Livre des religions et des sectes*, vol. 1, traduit par D. Gimaret et G. Monnot, Louvain-Paris, 1986, p. 543). Throughout this study I shall have recourse to this translation, since it seems to me to be most pertinent. Furthermore, in ancient times, terms like *taʾwīl, tafsīr, taʿbīr* ... seem to be equivalents (except when the text says otherwise) and one could translate them indifferently by "hermeneutics", "commentary", "interpretation", "exegesis", "explanation", etc.

it contains of knowledge of the future, of its teachings of the past, of the healing of your ills and of the ordering of your relationships.[7]

The hermeneutic nature of Shiʿism, communicated through the teachings of the imams, is also strikingly illustrated by the celebrated and crucial hadith of the "Warrior of the *taʾwīl*", a prophetic tradition in which Muḥammad is said to have proclaimed:

> There is among you [i. e. my followers] someone who struggles for the spiritual interpretation of the Quran just as I myself struggled for the letter of its revelation: and this person is ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.[8]

A similar saying is attributed to Ammār b. Yāsir, a loyal Companion of both the Prophet and ʿAlī. He is said to have spoken it during the battle of Ṣiffīn between ʿAlī's troops and those of Muʿāwiya:

> By the One who holds my life in His Hand, just as we once fought our enemies for
> [the letter] of Revelation, we fight today for its spirit.[9]

It is interesting to note that, according to this saying, corroborated by others, the real issue of the battle of Ṣiffīn was the preservation of the spirit of

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7   ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (attributed to), *Nahj al-balāgha* (compiled by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī), ed. ʿA.N. Fayḍ al-Islām, Tehran, 4th ed., 1351/1972, sermon no. 157, p. 499. This type of tradition is at the basis of the Shiʿi doctrinal couple that calls the Quran "the silent guide" and the imam "the speaking Quran". I shall return to it.

8   Al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, ed. H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī, Qumm, 1360/1960, p. 15; al-Khazzāz al-Rāzī, *Kifāyat al-athar*, ed. A. Kūhkamareʾī, Qumm, 1401/1980, p. 76, 88, 117, 135 (on p. 66 of this work in a tradition attributed to the Prophet, it is the *qāʾim*, the eschatological saviour, who is presented as the "warrior of spiritual hermeneutics"); al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 19, pp. 25-26; al-Baḥrānī Hāshim b. Sulaymān, *al-Burhān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, (5 vols), Tehran, s.d., vol. 1, p. 17. See also M.M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis*, op. cit., p. 88, footnote 1. It is interesting to note that a great number of Sunni sources also record this tradition and that, what is more, to the first declaration of the Prophet Abū Bakr and ʿUmar reply, asking him, one after the other, if they are that "warrior of the *taʾwīl*"; to which Muḥammad replies that it is ʿAlī; see for example Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 3, Cairo, 1313/1896, pp. 31, 33, 82; Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 8 (9 vols), ed. S.M. al-Laḥḥām, Beirut, 1409/1989, p. 64; al Nasāʾī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ amir al-muʾminīn ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib*, no. 156, ed. al-Dānī b. Munīr Āl Zahwī, Saida-Beirut, 1424/2004, pp. 116-117; al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, *al-Mustadrak ʿalā l-ṣaḥīḥayn* (above footnote 1), vol. 3, p. 122; Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, vol. 1, Cairo, 1351/1932-1933, p. 67.

9   Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, § 1676, ed. C. Pellat, Beirut, 1965-1979, (trans. C. Pellat, *Les Prairies d'or*, vol. 3, Paris, 1962-1997, p. 655: "By the One who holds my life in His hand, just as we have (once) fought them in the name of the revelation of (the Quran), we fight them today for its interpretation") (English transl. is mine).

the Quran by 'Alī and his followers in the face of the threat of its annihilation by the partisans of a reductive literalism, Mu'āwiya and his followers. For the Alids, the rupture of the organic link between the Book and its hermeneutic interpretation by the imam, and the consequent reduction of the Word of God to its letter, is an amputation from the religion of its most precious limb. The entire spiritual destiny of Islam was here at stake, hence the necessity of the *jihād* lead by 'Alī against Mu'āwiya.[10]

In the conception transmitted by these traditions, the mission of 'Alī, the first imam and "father" of all succeeding imams and the supreme symbol of Shi'ism, is to complete the mission of Muḥammad, by unveiling the hidden spirit of Revelation through his hermeneutic teaching. The same idea is contained in another prophetic tradition documented by the Ismaili thinker Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. shortly after 427/1036): "I am the master of the revealed letter [the Quran] and 'Alī is the master of its spiritual hermeneutics."[11]

Other traditions also reported by non-Shi'ī sources, notably mystical Sunni writings, stress the role of 'Alī as the initiate to the arcanes of the Quran and to the conditions of its revelation, all traditions to which Shi'ī writings continually refer. 'Alī himself is reputed to have said:

> "Each revealed verse without exception, the Prophet recited it to me, dictated it to me so that I might write it down with my own hand, taught me the esoteric and exoteric commentaries (*ta'wīl/tafsīr*), the abrogating and the abrogated (*nāsikh/mansūkh*), the clear and the ambiguous (*muḥkam/ mutashābih*). At the same time the messenger of God implored God that He might instill in me understanding and learning by heart; and indeed I have not forgotten a single word of it".[12]

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10   *Jihād* (conventionally translated as "holy war") is the name of the action of the active participle *mujāhid*, term that one finds (besides of the term *muqātil*) in the title of the hadith of the "Warrior of the *ta'wīl*". This hermeneutical conception of the battles of 'Alī is admirably defended many centuries later by the great philosopher Mollā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640) in his poetry, which testifies to the longevity of the doctrine; see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Le combattant du *ta'wīl*: un poème de Mollā Ṣadrā sur 'Alī (Aspects de l'imamologie duo-décimaine IX)", *Journal Asiatique* 292/1-2 (2004), pp. 331-359 (*La Religion discrète*, chap. 9; also published in T. Lawson (ed.), *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought. Essays in Honour of Hermann Landolt*, London-New York, 2005, article no. 31).

11   Al-Kirmānī, *Majmū'at al-rasā'il*, ed. M. Ghālib, Beirut, 1983, p. 156.

12   Al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*, ed. M.B. al-Maḥmūdī, Beirut, 1393/1974, vol. 1, p. 35. The doctrinal affiliation of al-Ḥaskānī is not certain. He seems to have been either a Ḥanafi Sunni with strong Shi'ī and mystical sympathies or more probably a crypto-Shi'ī observing *taqiyya* (the duty of guarding the secret); see E. Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work: Ibn Ṭāwūs and his Library*, Leiden, 1992, pp. 150-151.

"The Quran has been revealed according to seven Themes (?) (*sabʿat aḥruf*)[13] and each of these Themes includes a clear (*ẓahr*) and a hidden (*baṭn*) level. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is he who has the knowledge of the exoteric (*ẓāhir*) and of the esoteric (*bāṭin*) [of each Theme]".[14]

"Ask me, ʿAlī is reputed to have said. In God's name, I will leave none of your questions unanswered. Ask me about the Book of God. Not one verse has been revealed without my knowing [when] it was revealed, during the night or during the day, [and where it was revealed], on a plain or on a mountain".[15]

ʿAlī is also said to have declared:

"Not a single verse has been revealed without my knowing the reason for it and the place of its revelation. My Lord has given me a heart endowed with penetrating intelligence and a tongue to answer all questions (*qalban ʿaqūlan wa lisānan saʾūlan*)".[16]

"There is, apart from the Prophet, none more learned than ʿAlī as in the knowledge to be found between the two covers of the Book of God".[17]

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13   On the complexity of the term *ḥarf*, pl. *ḥurūf*, *aḥruf*, (letter, reading, expression, theme …) in the framework of Quranic sciences see C. Gilliot, "Les sept 'Lectures'. Corps social et Écriture révélée", *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985), pp. 5-25 et (1986), pp. 49-62; Id., *Exégèse, langue et théologie en Islam: l'exégèse coranique de Tabari (m. 311/923)*, Paris, 1990, chap. v, 1st part, pp. 112-126; K. Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qurʾānic Exegesis in Early Islam*, Leiden, 1993, index s.v.; V. Comero, *Les traditions sur la constitution du muṣḥaf de ʿUthmān*, Beirut, 2012, pp. 119 sqq. ("Le thème des sept aḥruf").

14   Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, vol. 1, Cairo, 1351/1932, p. 65 (tradition attributed to Ibn Masʿūd); al-Qundūzī, *Yanābīʿ al-mawadda*, Najaf, s.d., p. 448 (tradition attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās).

15   Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Faqīh wa l-mutafaqqih*, vol. 2, ed. I. al-Anṣārī, Beirut, 1395/1975, p. 167; al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*, vol. 1, pp. 30-31; Ibn ʿAbdal-Barr, *al-Istīʿāb*, vol. 2, Beirut (fac-simile of the lithograph edition from Cairo 1328/1910), s.d., p. 509; Id., *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm wa faḍlihi*, vol. 1, Cairo, s.d., p. 114; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, vol. 7, Haydarabad, 1325/1907, p. 7, no. 338.

16   Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, Beirut, 1376/1956, vol. 2, p. 338; al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*, vol. 1, p. 33; Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, vol. 1, p. 68; al-Khwārazmī, *al-Manāqib* (= *Manāqib Amīr al-muʾminīn*), Najaf, 1385/ 1965, p. 46.

17   Al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*, vol. 1, p. 36 (tradition attributed to ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī); see also al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ amīr al-muʾminīn ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib*, Beirut, 1406/1986, p. 41; on ʿAlī as the first person to have wished to assemble a Quranic codex, see A. Mingana, "The Transmission of the Qurʾān", *The Muslim World* 7, 1917, pp. 223-232 et 402-414 (citation p. 226).

As numerous ancient textual testimonies declare, ʿAlī had his own Quranic recension, his codex (*muṣḥaf ʿAlī*).[18] According to Shiʿi accounts, after the death of the Prophet, ʿAlī was certain that Muḥammad's enemies, now in power, would to falsify the Book of God which, in its integral original version, explicitly contained his name, the names of his enemies as well as those of his friends, now excluded from power. It is indeed what did happen. It was therefore urgent for ʿAlī to compile the complete version of the Quran, which he alone possessed, in order to preserve the heaven-given Book as it had been revealed to the Prophet, three times more voluminous than the later, official and falsified version.[19] Yet, for a number of Shiʿi authors, this "Quran of ʿAlī" contained both the revelations "come down" to Muḥammad (*tanzīl*) and ʿAlī's commentaries (*taʾwīl*) upon them, whether inspired by God or taught to him by the Prophet.[20] Both categories of texts taken together were called *al-qurʾān*: the first category being the letter of the Revelation, its exoteric aspect (*ẓāhir*) and the second its spirit, its esoteric aspect (*bāṭin*). Both were organically linked. It

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18   I.K. Poonawala, "'Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb; i. Life", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 1, p. 839b; now E. Kohlberg & M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification. The Kitāb al-Qirāʾāt of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Sayyārī*, Leiden, 2009, introduction, *passim*. The hypothesis according to which the codex of ʿAlī was very different from the Quran, we now know, is plausible and the thesis of T. Nöldeke rejecting the very existence of such a codex drafted by ʿAlī is no longer sustainable (T. Nöldeke et al., *Geschichte des Qorāns*, (3 vols), Leipzig, 1909-1938, vol. 2, pp. 8-11); see now S. Kara, *In Search of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib's Codex. History and Traditions of the Earliest Copy of the Qurʾān*, Berlin, 2018.

19   See notably E. Kohlberg, "Some Notes on the Imamite Attitude to the Qurʾān", in S.M. Stern *et al.* (ed.), *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical tradition. Essays Presented by his friends and pupils to Richard Walzer on his seventieth birthday*, Oxford, 1972, pp. 209-224; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin dans le shīʿisme originel. Aux sources de l'ésotérisme en islam*, Paris, 1992 (2007²), pp. 200-227; Id., *Le Coran silencieux*, chapters 1 and 2; E. Kohlberg & M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification*, Introduction, pp. 24 sqq. (with the mention of all the studies on the subject in footnotes 116 to 119).

20   Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Awāʾil al-maqālāt*, ed. ʿA. Wajdī Wāʿiẓ Charandābī, with an introduction and commentaries by F. Zanjānī, 2e ed., Tabriz, 1371/1952, pp. 54-56; also in the *Silsilat muʾallafāt al-Shaykh al-Mufīd*, vol. 4, ed. I. al-Anṣārī al-Zanjānī al-Khūʾīnī with the commentaries of the editor and those of Faḍlallāh Zanjānī (re-edition of Tabriz edition), 1993, pp. 80-82; see also D. Sourdel, *L'Imamisme vu par le Cheikh al-Mufīd*, Paris, 1974, pp. 73-75; E. Kohlberg, "Some Notes on the Imamite Attitude to the Qurʾān", pp. 215-216; M.J. McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufīd (m. 413/1022)*, Beyrouth, 1978, pp. 96-98; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "al-Šayḫ al-Mufīd (m. 413/1022) et la question de la falsification du Coran", in D. De Smet et M.A. Amir-Moezzi (eds.), *Controverses sur les écritures canoniques de l'islam*, Paris, 2014, the part devoted to the first passage of the *Awāʾil al-maqālāt*, pp. 210-213. After al-Mufīd, many other Shiʿi authors defended the same doctrine.

was the commentaries of ʿAlī, indispensable for an adequate understanding of
Revelation, that his adversaries removed, rendering the Quran, reduced to its
sole letter, barely intelligible. Hence the Shiʿi doctrinal pairing which describes
the extant Quran as the silent, mute Book or Guide (*Qurʾān/kitāb/imām ṣāmit*)
and ʿAlī – and, after him, the other imams descended from him – as the speak-
ing Quran or Book (*Qurʾān/kitāb nāṭiq*).[21]

3   Quranic Allusions to ʿAlī

A new stage is arrived at with the second "moment" of Shiʿi doctrines which
link the figure of the first imam to the holy Book of Islam, in which ʿAlī is seen
to be not only the inspired interpreter of the Quran but also part of its content.
Countless texts and traditions contain different kinds of Quranic allusions
to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. First of all are the revealed verses which refer directly to
him. The Zaydi Shiʿi Quranic commentary of al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥakam al-Ḥibarī
(d. 286/899) is no doubt one of the oldest existing sources in this regard. This
commentary, edited with its complement, contains a hundred traditions,
nearly all of which have the Companion Ibn ʿAbbās as their source, and con-
tain presumed allusions or hidden meanings of the Quran referring to ʿAlī, the
members of his family, his followers and his adversaries.[22] The work may be
considered as belonging to the genre of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* ("circumstances of
Revelation"), in a Shiʿi version that hides its identity under the authority of
Ibn ʿAbbās, a figure highly respected among non-Shiʿis and the acknowledged

21   M. Ayoub, "The Speaking Qurʾān and the Silent Qurʾān: A Study of the Principles and
      Development of Imāmī Tafsīr", in A. Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the
      Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, Oxford, 1988, pp. 177-198; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silen-
      cieux*, *passim* and especially chap. 3; on the crucial importance of the hermeneutics of the
      imam for a good understanding of the Quran see also M.M. Bar-Asher, "The Authority to
      Interpret the Qurʾān", in F. Daftary & G. Miskinzoda (eds.), *The Study of Shiʿi Islam: History,
      Theology and Law*, London, 2014, pp. 149-162.
22   *Tafsīr al-Ḥibarī*, ed. M.R. al-Ḥusaynī, Beirut, 1408/1987. The book is known under many
      titles: *Tanzīl al-āyāt al-munzala fī manāqib ahl al-bayt* (the Revelation of the verses
      concerning the virtues of the People of the House of the Prophetic Family), *Mā nazala
      min al-Qurʾān fī amir al-muʾminīn* (What has been revealed in the Quran regarding the
      Commander of the Faithful, i.e. ʿAlī), *Mā nazala min al-Qurʾān fī ahl al-bayt* (What has
      been revealed in the Quran about the People of the Prophetic Family), etc. About this
      author and his work, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Le Tafsīr d'al-Ḥibarī (m. 286/899). Exégèse
      coranique et ésotérisme Shiʿite ancien", *Journal des savants*, janvier-juin 2009, pp. 3-23
      (English translation in F. Daftary & G. Miskinzoda (eds.), *The Study of Shiʿi Islam*, part II,
      chap. 5). A modified version of this article provides the third chapter of M.A. Amir-Moezzi,
      Le Coran silencieux, pp. 101-125.

"father" of Sunni Quranic exegesis.[23] The *Tafsīr* of al-Ḥibarī is thus one of the most ancient sources of what I have called elsewhere "personalised commentaries" in Shiʿism.[24] A few examples, among many others, concerning ʿAlī (translations follow A.J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, London, 1964, with some modifications):

– Quran 2 (al-Baqara) / 45: "Seek sustenance in patience and in prayer, for painful it is, save to the humble." Ibn ʿAbbās: "'Humble' is he who prostrates himself in prayer [before God] and who goes joyfully to pray; this denotes only the Messenger of God and ʿAlī."[25]

– Quran 2 (al-Baqara) / 82: "And those that believe, and do deeds of righteousness – those are the inhabitants of Paradise; there they shall dwell forever." Ibn ʿAbbās: "This has been especially revealed concerning ʿAlī, since he was the first to have converted [to Islam] and the first, after the Prophet, to have performed the canonical prayer."[26]

– Quran 3 (Āl ʿImrān) / 61: "[…] Come now, let us call our sons and your sons, our wives and your wives, our persons and your persons, then let us humbly pray and so lay God's curse upon those who lie." Ibn ʿAbbās: "[This verse] is revealed about the persons of the Messenger of God and ʿAlī; [the expression] 'our wives and your wives' concerns Fāṭima; 'our sons and your sons', that is Ḥasan et Ḥusayn [sic: both names are without the article]."[27]

– Quran 5 (al-Māʾida) / 55: "Your friend is only God, and His Messenger, and the believers who perform the prayer and pay the alms, and bow them down [during prayer]." Ibn ʿAbbās: "This has been especially revealed about ʿAlī."[28]

– Quran 5 (al-Māʾida) /67: "O Messenger, deliver that which has been sent down to thee from thy Lord; for if thou dost not, thou wilt not have delivered His Message." Ibn ʿAbbās: "This was revealed concerning ʿAlī. Indeed the

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23 On the *asbāb al-nuzūl*, see A. Rippin, "Occasions of Revelation", *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, vol. 3, pp. 569-573; M. Yahia, "Circonstances de la révélation", in M.A. Amir-Moezzi (ed.), *Dictionnaire du Coran*, Paris, 2007, pp. 168-171. On the figure of Ibn ʿAbbās, see the seminal article of C. Gilliot, "Le portrait 'mythique' d' Ibn ʿAbbās", *Arabica* 32/2 (1985), pp. 127-184.

24 M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, pp. 115-117. The "personalised commentary", perhaps the oldest form of Quranic esoteric exegesis in Shiʿism, identifies different figures of the first times of Islam beneath the veil of the Quranic verses. In this kind of exegesis, ʿAlī gets by far the lion's share. See here, chap. 8.

25 *Tafsīr al-Ḥibarī*, tradition no. 6, p. 238.

26 *Ibid.*, tradition no 8, pp. 240-241.

27 *Ibid.*, tradition no 12, p. 247. About this verse see P. Ballanfat et M. Yahia, art. "Ordalie", in *Dictionnaire du Coran*, op. cit., pp. 618-620; on this notion see L. Schmucker, art. "Mubāhala", *EI2*, vol. 7, p. 278.

28 *Tafsīr al-Ḥibarī*, tradition no 22, p. 260.

Prophet had received the order to declare ʿAlī [to be his successor]. He then took his hand and declared: 'He whose patron (*mawlā*) I am, ʿAlī is also his patron. Lord! Love him who loves ʿAlī (*wāli man wālāhu*) and be hostile to him who is hostile to him'."[29] To this tradition is may be added one that comments upon Quran 13 (al-Raʿd) / 43, reported by the traditionist ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAṭāʾ, who cites imam Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Bāqir: "God revealed to his Messenger: 'Declare to the people: He whose patron I am, ʿAlī is also his patron'. But the Prophet, fearing the people, did not declare it.[30] Then God revealed to him: 'O Messenger, deliver that which has been sent down to thee from thy Lord; for if thou dost not, thou wilt not have delivered His Message'. It is then that the Messenger of God took the hand of ʿAlī on the day of Ghadīr Khumm and proclaimed: 'He whose patron I am, ʿAlī is also his patron'."[31]

– Quran 9 (al-Tawba) / 18: "Only he shall inhabit God's places of worship who believes in God and the Last Day, and performs the prayer, and pays the alms, and fears none but God alone; it may be that those will be among the guided." Ibn ʿAbbās: "This verse is exclusively reserved for ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib."[32]

– Quran 9 (al-Tawba) / 20-21: "Those who believe, and have emigrated, and have struggled in the way of God with their possessions and their selves are mightier in rank with God; and those – they are the triumphant; their Lord gives them good tidings of mercy from Him and good pleasure; for them await gardens wherein is lasting bliss." Ibn ʿAbbās: "This is exclusively about ʿAlī."[33]

– Quran 14 (Ibrāhīm) / 27: "God confirms those who believe with a resolute word." Ibn ʿAbbās: "This concerns the *walāya* of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib."[34]

– Quran 33 (al-Aḥzāb) / 33: "People of the [prophetic] House, God only desires to put away from you abomination and to cleanse you." Around ten

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29 *Ibid.*, tradition no. 24, pp. 262-263. This sentence, attributed to the Prophet, is called in Shiʿism "the hadith of the *walāya*" (on this term see note 5 and hereafter). Uttered at Ghadīr Khumm, it is meant to proclaim ʿAlī as the successor to Muḥammad (about this location, highly emblematic for Shiʿis see L. Veccia Vaglieri, *EI2*; Massi Dakake & A. Kazemi Moussavi in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 10, pp. 246-249; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Encyclopaedia of Islam 3*, vol. 5, pp. 123-128). On the interpretation of this verse 5: 67, see note 53 below and the related text.

30 The narrative implies that even in the lifetime of the Prophet, his adversaries, being hypocrites and tacticians, were present among his followers and the question of his succession was a source of extreme tension.

31 *Tafsīr al-Ḥibarī*, tradition no 41, pp. 285-287.

32 *Ibid.*, tradition no 32, p. 272.

33 *Ibid.*, tradition no 34, p. 274.

34 *Ibid.*, tradition no 42, p. 288. On the *walāya* of ʿAlī in the Quran see hereafter.

traditions transmitted by several Companions of the Prophet identify the "People of the Prophetic Family" of this verse with the 'Five of the Cloak', namely Muḥammad, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.[35]

Even before al-Ḥibarī, the anonymous author(s) of the *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays* associated numerous Quranic verses with ʿAlī.[36] The verses 9 (al-Tawba): 100 and 56 (al-Wāqiʿa): 10 are said to be linked to the person of the first imam: "And the Outstrippers, the first of the Emigrants and the Helpers [of the Prophet]" and "The Outstrippers, the Outstrippers those are they brought nigh [to God]."[37]

The verses 98 (al-Bayyina): 7 et 6 are associated respectively with the friends and the enemies of ʿAlī: "those who believe, and do righteous deeds, those are the best of creatures" and "The unbelievers of the People of the Book and the idolaters shall be in the Fire of Gehenna, therein dwelling forever; those are the worst of creatures."[38]

The verses 14 (Ibrāhīm): 37, 22 (al-Ḥajj): 77 et 2 (al-Baqara): 143 are associated with ʿAlī: "[Lord] make hearts of men yearn towards them"; "O men, bow you down and prostrate yourselves, and serve your Lord, and do good; haply so you shall prosper"; "We appointed you a midmost nation that you might be witnesses to the people."[39] Likewise the verses 11 (Hūd): 17 and 13 (al-Raʿd): 43: "And what of him who stands upon a clear sign from his Lord, and a witness from Him recites it [the Revelation]"; "and whosoever possesses knowledge of the Book."[40]

Examples of verses of this kind, supposed to have been revelations concerning ʿAlī, can be counted in the hundreds. Shiʿi religious literature has made these "'personalised commentaries' exclusively dedicated to ʿAlī" into a

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35   *Ibid.*, traditions no. 50-59, pp. 297-311. This exegesis, particularly prized by the Shiʿis occurs many times, including in Sunni sources; see *ibid.*, pp. 502-533 (editor's notes). See also above footnotes 2 et 3 and the relative texts.

36   For the references of this work, see above footnote 6. On this book, whose oldest parts could be among the oldest Islamic sources, see H. Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shīʿite Literature*, vol. 1, Oxford, 2003, pp. 82-86; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Note bibliographique sur le *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*. Le plus ancien ouvrage Shiʿite existant", in Id., M.M. Bar Asher & S. Hopkins (eds.), *Le Shīʿisme imāmite quarante ans après. Hommage à Etan Kohlberg*, Turnhout, 2009, pp. 33-48 (chapter 1 of *Le Coran silencieux* is an expanded version of that article); M. Massi Dakake, "Writing and Resistance: The Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Early Shiʿism", in F. Daftary & G. Miskinzoda (eds.), *The Study of Shiʿi Islam*, op. cit., part III.8, pp. 181-201; R. Gleave, "Early shiite hermeneutic".

37   *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*, vol. 2, p. 643-644 (tradition no. 11).

38   *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 832-833 (tradition n° 41).

39   *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 885-886 (tradition n° 54).

40   *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 903 (tradition n° 60).

veritable literary genre which includes countless works from the 3rd/9th century until today.[41]

What is more, many Quranic words or expressions are almost systematically identified as being allusions to ʿAlī or to the status of imam/*walī* of which he is the most illustrious example: *al-sabīl* ("the way"), *al-ḥaqq* ("the truth"), *al-khayr* ("the good"), *al-ḥasana* ("the good action"), *al-mīzān* ("Balance"), *al-niʿma* ("the favour"), *al-ṣirāṭ* ("the path", "the way") or (*al-*)*ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* ("the straight path") and many others.[42] From these spring the numerous traditions abundantly used in Shiʿi doctrinal works:

> "The Quran is revealed in four parts, ʿAlī is reputed to have said: one quarter concerns us (i.e. us, the people of the Prophetic Family), another quarter is about our adversaries, a third quarter is about what is licit and illicit and the last quarter concerns duties and precepts. The most noble parts of the Quran belong to us."[43]

> "ʿAlī has no equal in the Book for what has been revealed about him there."[44]

> "Seventy verses have been revealed about ʿAlī with which no one else can be associated."[45]

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41   M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Le Tafsīr d'al-Ḥibarī …", pp. 15-17 (= Id., *Le Coran silencieux*, pp. 116-117). Among the works that have come down to us and have been published, let us mention: al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī (d. after 470/1077-1078), *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*, ed. M.B. Maḥmūdī (already cited); Ibn al-Biṭrīq al-Ḥillī (d. 600/1203-1204), *Khaṣāʾiṣ al-waḥy al-mubīn fī manāqib amīr al-muʾminīn*, M.B. Maḥmūdī, Tehran, 1406/1986; al-Ḥāfiẓ Rajab al-Bursī (8th/14th c.), *al-Durr al-thamīn fī khams miʾa āya nazalat fī amīr al-muʾminīn*, ed. al-Sayyid ʿA. ʿĀshūr, Beirut, 1424/2003 (see here chapter 8); al-Baḥrānī Hāshim b. Sulaymān (11th-12th/17th-18th centuries), *al-Lawāmiʿ al-nūrāniyya fī asmāʾ amīr al-muʾminīn al-Qurʾāniyya*, Qumm, 1394/1974-1975; al-Burūjirdī al-Ḥusayn b. Bāqir (13th/19th c.), *al-Naṣṣ al-jalī fī arbaʿīn āya fī shaʾn ʿAlī*, Tehran, 1320/1902-1903; the contemporary scholar, S.M. Ḥusaynī Bahārānčī, *Āyāt al-faḍāʾil yā faḍāʾil-e ʿAlī dar Qurʾān*, Qumm, 1380/2001. For Quranic references to ʿAlī among Ismaili Shiʿis see D. De Smet, "Le Coran, son origine, sa nature et sa falsification. Positions ismaéliennes controversées", in Id. et M.A. Amir-Moezzi (eds.), *Controverses sur les écritures canoniques de l'islam* (above footnote 20), sub-chapter titled "La présence de ʿAlī dans le Coran", pp. 258-262.

42   See for example E. Kohlberg, "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, ii. ʿAlī as seen by the community", p. 843b.

43   See for example *Tafsīr al-Ḥibarī*, tradition no. 2, p. 233; Furāt al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr*, ed. M.al-Kāẓim, Tehran, 1410/1990, pp. 45 sqq.; al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*, nos 57 sqq. The tradition is also attributed to the Prophet.

44   Al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī, 1, pp. 39 sqq. (tradition going back to Ibn ʿAbbās).

45   *Ibid.*, 1: 43 (tradition going back to Mujāhid).

4   The Explicit Mentions of 'Alī in the Quran

According to a whole range of other traditions, the presence of 'Alī in the text
of the Quran itself is not limited to allusions, metaphors and symbols. He is
also explicitly mentioned there. Now we know this not to be the case in the
official version of the Quran known as the 'Uthmanian Vulgate. This is because,
according to a great number of ancient Shi'i sources, in particular those dat-
ing from the pre-Buyyid period, the "califal Quran" is merely a censored and
falsified version, concocted by the adversaries of Muḥammad and of 'Alī, of
the true divine Revelation.[46] The latter mentioned very precisely not only the
names of a great number of contemporaries of the Prophet, his family, his
friends and followers, but also of his adversaries and enemies. Apart from a
few rare exceptions that do not pose particular theological and political prob-
lems, all the other names are said to have been deleted from the Quranic text
(in this 'Vulgate' there are only four or five mentions of Muḥammad, a mention
of Zayd, the presumed adopted son of the Prophet, and another of Abū Lahab,
an uncle and adversary of Muḥammad according to the tradition).

In a tradition reported by al-Kulaynī (d. 328 or 329/939-40 or 940-41), one
reads: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Naṣr [disciple of imam al-Riḍā] tells us:

> Imam Abū l-Ḥasan [the eighth imam, 'Alī al-Riḍā] lent me a codex of the
> Quran, whilst telling me not to open it. I did so however, and stumbled
> upon the verse: 'Those who have become disbelievers' and there I saw the
> names of 70 men of Quraysh as well as the names of their fathers. Then
> the imam sent someone to ask me to return the codex.[47]

In an eschatological tradition telling of a vision of 'Alī and transmitted by
al-Nu'mānī (d. around 345 or 360/956 or 971), we find the following:

> al-Aṣbagh b. Nubāta [compagnon of 'Alī] reports: "I heard 'Alī say: 'I see
> from here the non-Arabs (al-'ajam) [i.e. the companions of the Saviour
> during his Return in the end times] settled under their tents pitched in
> the mosque of Kūfa and teaching the Quran as it had been revealed to

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46   See above. Also E. Kohlberg & M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification*, notably
      the introduction; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, especially chapters 1 to 3; Id., *La
      Preuve de Dieu. La mystique Shi'ite à travers l'œuvre de Kulaynī* (IXᵉ-Xᵉ siècle), Paris, 2018,
      pp. 122 sqq. and 265 sqq.

47   Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, (4 vols), ed. J. Muṣṭafawī, Tehran, s.d., with Persian transla-
      tion (4th vol., translated by H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī dates from 1386/1966), kitāb faḍl al-Qur'ān,
      bāb al-nawādir, vol. 4, no. 3570, pp. 440-441.

the people.' I asked: 'Prince of the believers! Isn't it [the Quran] now as it had been revealed?' 'No, he answered, from it have been deleted (*muḥiya minhu*) the names of 70 persons from Quraysh, as well as the names of their fathers and only the name of Abū Lahab was left in order to humiliate the Prophet, because Abū Lahab was his uncle'."[48]

The "original Quran" would have contained many names of Muḥammad's contemporaries and again, according to Shiʿi sources, the explicit mentions of ʿAlī would have been by far the most numerous. The following quotations from the "Quran" which follow will illustrate our argument (the expressions added to the text of the official Quran are written in italics):

– Quran 2 (al-Baqara) / 6: "[…] As for those who disbelieve in the *walāya of ʿAlī*, alike it is to them whether thou hast warned them or hast not warned them, they do not believe."[49]

– Quran 2 (al-Baqara)/87: "[…] And every time there came to you *Muḥammad* [instead of "a Messenger"] with what is about the *muwālāt of ʿAlī* [here *muwālāt* is synonymous with *walāya*] you did not desire for yourselves, you became arrogant so you denied a group *from the Family of Muḥammad* and slew and killed another group?"[50]

– Quran 2 (al-Baqara) / 90: "Evil is the thing they have sold themselves for, disbelieving in that which God sent down *regarding ʿAlī* and this out of envy …"[51]

– Quran 4 (al-Nisāʾ) / 167-170: "Surely those who have been unjust [instead of: "Surely the unbelievers, who have been unjust"] *regarding the rights of the Family of Muḥammad*, God would not forgive them, neither guide them on any path / but the road to Gehenna, therein dwelling forever and ever; and that for God is an easy matter / O men, the Messenger has now come to you with the truth from your Lord *about the walāya of ʿAlī*; so believe; better is it for you. And if you disbelieve in *the walāya of ʿAlī*, [know that] to God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth."[52]

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48   Al-Nuʿmānī, *Kitāb al-ghayba*, ed. ʿA.A. Ghaffārī, Tehran, 1397/1977, chap. 21, no. 5, p. 452. In surah 111 (al-Masad) Abū Lahab is indeed presented as a highly negative figure.

49   Al-Sayyārī, *Kitāb al-qirāʾāt/al-Tanzīl wa l-taḥrīf*, ed. E. Kohlebrg and M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification*, p. 20, no. 62 (Arabic text), commentary in English, p. 80, no. 62. On the mentions of the *walāya* in the Quran see also Amir-Moezzi, *Preuve de Dieu*, pp. 265 sqq.

50   Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, kitāb al-ḥujja, bāb fīhi nukat wa nutaf min al-tanzīl fī l-walāya, vol. 2, p. 285, no. 31.

51   Al-Sayyārī, *op. cit.*, p. 20, no. 61 (Arabic text); see also pp. 79-80, no. 61 (commentary in English).

52   Al-Qummī ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm, *Tafsīr*, ed. al-Mūsawī al-Jazāʾirī, Najaf, 1386-87 / 1966-68, vol. 1, p. 159; al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, Qumm, 1380/1960, vol. 1, p. 285; al-Kulaynī, *op.cit.*, vol. 2, p. 295,

– Quran 5 (al-Māʾida) / 67: "O Messenger, deliver that which has been sent down to thee from thy Lord *about ʿAlī* ..."[53]

– Quran 7 (al-Aʿrāf) /172: "And when thy Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed, and made them testify touching themselves, 'Am I not your Lord?, *isn't Muḥammad the messenger of God, isn't ʿAlī the commander of the faithful*?' They said: 'Yes, we testify'."[54]

– Quran 15 (al-Ḥijr) / 41: "[God] said: 'This is *the straight* path of *ʿAlī*" (*hādhā ṣirātᵘ ʿAlīyin mustaqīmᵘⁿ*, instead of: This is for Me a straight path, *hādhā ṣirātᵘⁿ ʿalayya mustaqīmᵘⁿ*).[55]

– Quran 16 (al-Naḥl) / 24: "And when it is said to them, 'What has your Lord sent down *about ʿAlī*?' they say, 'Fairy-tales of the ancients'."[56]

– Quran 20 (Ṭāhā) / 115: "And we entrusted Adam before *with Words concerning Muḥammad, ʿAlī, [Fāṭima,] al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and the imams of their progeny*, but he forgot them."[57]

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no. 59; al-Baḥrānī, *al-Burhān*, vol. 1, p. 428; al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Ṣāfī fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, vol. 1 (2 vols), Tehran, s.d., p. 414; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 36, p. 99.

53   Al-Sayyārī, *Qirāʾāt*, p. 45, no 165 (Arabic text), pp. 115-116 (commentary in English); al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 201; al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Ṣāfī*, vol. 1, p. 460, 462-63; al-Baḥrānī, *Burhān*, vol. 1, p. 501 (instead of *fī ʿAlī* – "about ʿAlī", there is a *anna ʿAliyyan mawlā l-muʾminīn* – "on the fact that ʿAlī is the patron of the faithful" –; *mawlā* has of course the same root as *walāya*). On *muʾmin* – literally "believer" – with the technical sense of 'initiated in the teachings of the imams', see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, index s.v. See also footnotes 29-31 above and referenced texts (the exegesis of this same verse in al-Ḥibarī does not refer to any explicit mention of ʿAlī by the Quran, probably because this author seems to avoid explicitly mentioning the question of the falsification of the Quran; see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, p. 113).

54   Al-Sayyārī, *Qirāʾāt*, p. 52, no. 195 (and p. 53, no 196, with the variant reading: isn't ʿAlī his legatee?), pp. 125-126 (commentary); al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 41; al-Baḥrānī, *Burhān*, vol. 2, p. 50; al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Ithbāt al-hudāt*, re-ed. Tehran, 1364/1985, vol. 3, p. 545; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 9, p. 256. About this verse see R. Gramlich, "Der Urvertrag inder Koranauslegung (zu Sura 7,172-173)", *Der Islam* 60 (1983), pp. 205-230.

55   Al-Sayyārī, *Qirāʾāt*, p. 74, nos 282 et 286 (Arabic text), pp. 155-17 (commentary). A great number of Shiʿi sources, Twelver as well as Ismaili, have reported this version of this verse. Generally speaking, the reading of this verse posed many problems to medieval Muslim scholars and to Orientalists and Islamologists. Madelung and Walker translated it as: "This is the straight path of ʿAlī" (in W. Madelung & P. Walker, *The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shiʿi Witness. An Edition and English Translation of Ibn al-Haytham's Kitāb al-Munāẓarāt*, London, 2000, p. 85 (English text = p. 29 Arabic text); see also D. De Smet, "Le Coran, son origine, sa nature et sa falsification. Positions ismaéliennes controversées", p. 259.

56   Furāt al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr*, p. 234; al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 383; al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 257; al-Baḥrānī, *Burhān*, vol. 2, p. 363; al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Ṣāfī*, vol. 1, p. 920; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 9, p. 102 and vol. 36, p. 104.

57   Al-Sayyārī, *Qirāʾāt*, p. 21, no. 65 (Arabic text) et p. 87, no. 339 (Arabic text), pp. 80-81 (commentary). With al-Sayyārī, contrary to almost all the numerous other sources, the name

– Quran 33 (al-Aḥzāb) / 71: "Whosoever obeys God and His Messenger *regard-ing the walāya of ʿAlī and that of the imams after him*, has won a mighty triumph."[58]
– Quran 33 (al-Aḥzāb) / 25: "God suffices to the believers in fighting *thanks to ʿAlī*, surely God is All-strong, All-mighty."[59]
– Quran 43 (al-Zukhruf) / 4: In the Mother of the Book "He [i.e. ʿAlī] is with Us [i.e. God], *ʿAlī who is full of wisdom*" (instead of the official understanding: "[…] it is [i.e. the Quran], with Us, exalted and wise").[60]

These quotations suffice, but there are many others.[61] God would have named ʿAlī and his *walāya* in His Book – before the falsification – and this on very numerous occasions; infinitely more than he mentioned the prophet Muḥammad himself, if one is to believe ancient Shiʿi traditions. The question that then needs legitimately to be asked is the following: why? For what reason did God so strongly insist on the importance of ʿAlī?

5   The Double Nature of ʿAlī and His Holiness

In the Shiʿi doctrinal corpus in general and in the hadith compilations in particular, ʿAlī is presented under two different, but also interdependent, aspects: the historical, physical, terrestrial figure and the spiritual, metaphysical, celestial being. Here we find again the omnipresent Shiʿi couple of the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin*, of the visible and the hidden, of the manifest and the secret, of the exoteric and the esoteric. The earthly ʿAlī, the historical imam *par excellence*, is the manifestation, the revealed face of the celestial Imam, a metaphysical entity,

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of Fāṭima is not mentioned (starting with al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl*, kitāb al-ḥujja, vol. 2, p. 283, no. 23).

58   Al-Sayyārī, *Qirāʾāt*, p. 111, no. 428 (Arabic text), p. 202 (commentary); al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 198; al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl*, ibid., vol. 2, p. 279, no. 8; al-Baḥrānī, *Burhān*, vol. 3, p. 340; al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Ṣāfī*, vol. 2, p. 369.

59   Al-Sayyārī, *Qirāʾāt*, p. 111, nos 425 et 426 (Arabic text), pp. 201-202 (commentary).

60   Al-Sayyārī, *Qirāʾāt*, p. 134, no 501 (Arabic text), pp. 223-224 (commentary). For Ismaili authors see Madelung-Walker, *op.cit.* (above footnote 55), p. 85 ("*In the mother of the Book which is with us, he is ʿAlī, full of wisdom*" = p. 29 of the Arabic text); D. De Smet, "Le Coran, son origine …", p. 259.

61   See M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 210-214; Id., "Notes à propos de la *walāya* imamite", pp. 723-726 (= *La Religion discrète*, pp. 178-183); M.M. Bar-Asher, "Variant Readings and Additions of the Imāmī-Šīʿa to the Quran", *Israel Oriental Studies* 13 (1993), pp. 39-74. Furthermore, in the commentaries of the *Kitāb al-Qirāʾāt* of al-Sayyārī (Kohlerg & Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification*), many occurrences of the traditions are noted.

also often called 'Alī, that is the locus of manifestation of the divine Names and Attributes. This theophanic entity, the first created being, is sometimes (but not always) associated with other pre-existential entities, with the celestial persons of other saintly figures that Shi'ism described as the Impeccable Ones (*ma'ṣūm*), namely Muḥammad, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn or, by extension, all the imams. At the dawn of the creation of the physical world, it is placed, in the form of light, in Adam, to be transmitted from generation to generation to the Friends or Allies of God (*walī*, pl. *awliyā'*), prophets, imams, male and female saints of History, to attain its historical destination, the historical 'Alī.[62] This "light" of the divine alliance, making of its carrier a man (or woman) of God, receptacle and transmitter of the divine teachings, is described, sometimes with nuances, by various technical terms in theological, prophetological and imamological contexts: *walāya* (as we have seen, the term is difficult to translate with a single word – see above footnote 5), *waṣiyya* (legacy, inheritance), *nūr* (light), *amr* (another word that is difficult to translate: order, thing, affair ...), *amr ilāhī* (divine *amr*), *juz' ilāhī* (divine particle), or also by combinations of these (*nūr al-walāya, nūr al-waṣiyya, waṣiyya walawiyya, amr al-walāya/al-waṣiyya* ...), etc.[63] It is true, as we have just said, that in the traditions concerning this entity, its creation, its function and its transmission, the other members of the Impeccable Ones, and notably Muḥammad, sometimes accompany, but taking into account the whole of the corpus, it is clear that 'Alī show evidently is the pole around which the doctrine of the double nature of the divine man gravitates and this especially since 'Alī is also one of the most important Names of God.[64] In this context "the *walāya* of 'Alī" identifies a doctrinal element of exceptional richness: the sacredness of 'Alī as

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62   On these data see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, part II/1 and 2 ("Les mondes d'avant le monde. Le Guide-Lumière" and "L'humanité adamique. Le 'voyage' de la Lumière"), *op. cit.*, pp. 73-112; Id., "Cosmogony and Cosmology in Twelver Shi'ism", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 5, pp. 317-322; Id. *La Religion discrète*, chap. 4 ("La pré-existence de l'Imam"), pp. 109-133; Id. and Ch. Jambet, *Qu'est-ce que le Shī'isme?*, Paris, 2004, parts I-1, pp. 27-40; II-2, pp. 104-110 and 121-129.

63   Apart from the references in the preceding footnote see my monograph, "Notes à propos de la *walāya* imamite" (also above footnote 5 and related text); two seminal articles by U. Rubin, "Pre-existence and light. Aspects of the concept of Nūr Muḥammad", *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975), pp. 62-119; Id., "Prophets and Progenitors in Early Shī'a Tradition", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 1 (1979), pp. 41-65; on *amr* see the classical study by S. Pines, "Shī'ite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980), pp. 165-251 and now E. Krinis, *God's Chosen People: Judah Halevi's Kuzari and the Shī'ī Imām Doctrine*, Turnhout, 2014, index *s.v.* Order (*amr*).

64   D. Gimaret, *Les Noms divins en Islam*, Paris, 1988, index s.v. *'Alī*.

a theophanic being, the symbol of the Alliance with God (almost in the biblical sense of the term), the love of the metaphysical ʿAlī through love of and loyalty to his earthly manifestation, the historical ʿAlī, his spiritual and temporal power, the brotherhood uniting the members of the Shiʿi community in their common fidelity to ʿAlī, and lastly, the power, the light, and the divine particle that sanctifies men, of whom the first imam is the ultimate exemplar. This explains the centrality of the idea, and of the person who symbolizes it, to the Shiʿi who, therefore, often refer to themselves both as the *ahl al-walāya* (People of the *walāya*) and also as the ʿAlawīyūn (the Followers of ʿAlī).

ʿAlī thus becomes the religious symbol, the spiritual horizon of an initiatory secret, of a double-sided spiritual itinerary: the humanisation of the divine and the divinization of the human. The doctrine of the *walāya/waṣiyya/amr* is at the core of the Shiʿi faith, the hidden, esoteric (*bāṭin*) dimension contained in the exoteric (*ẓāhir*) religion sustained by prophecy (*nubuwwa*), itself symbolized by the figure of Muḥammad. Hence the Shiʿi saying, endlessly repeated in all kinds of texts: *al-walāya bāṭin al-nubuwwa* (the *walāya* is the esoteric dimension of prophecy). The historical ʿAlī is the guardian of this secret, the ultimate content of which is the metaphysical ʿAlī. Thus the Imam is at once the subject and object of the interpretation of Scripture: he is the exegete *par excellence* and his theophanic metaphysical dimension is the ultimate hermeneutic content. After these introductory lines the traditions that we are about to examine will perhaps become clearer:

> When God the Most High created the heavens and the earth, said the Prophet, He called them and they answered, then he offered them my *nubuwwa* and the *walāya* of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib [respectively, the exoteric and esoteric aspects of religion as divine Message] and they accepted them. Then God created the creatures and entrusted the matter of [their] religion (*amr al-dīn*) to us both. That is how the blessed are blessed through us and the wretched are wretched though us. We are those who make licit what is licit for them and make illicit what is illicit for them.[65]

The *walāya* of ʿAlī permeates the entire history of humanity and constitutes its spiritual substance, as it is found at the heart of all Revelations and all prophetic missions. Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (d. 290/902-3), an important transmitter of ancient pre-Buyyid Shiʿism, devoted several chapters of the second section

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[65]   Ibn Shādhān, *Miʾa manqaba*, Qumm, 1413/1993, "manqaba" 7, p. 48; al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-ghumma*, vol. 1, ed. H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī, Tabriz, re-ed. Qumm, 1381/1962, p. 291; al-Khwārazmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. 1, Qumm, s.d., p. 46.

of his great book *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt* to those questions.[66] According to many traditions originating mainly with the fifth and sixth imams, Muḥammad al-Bāqir et Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the pre-temporal Pact (*al-mīthāq*), made between God and the creatures at the dawn of creation and to which Quran 7 (al-A'rāf): 172 is said to allude, is mostly concerned with the *walāya*.[67] Other hadiths affirm that only the "elites" of creation pledged an oath of loyalty to the *walāya* of 'Alī, namely: the Near Ones (*al-muqarrabūn*) among the angels, the Messengers (*al-mursalūn*) among the prophets and the Tested Ones (*al-mumtaḥanūn*) among the believers.[68] According to a prophetic tradition, in the pre-existential World of Shadows (*'ālam al-aẓilla*), the status of the prophets was only achieved when they recognized the *walāya*.[69] Likewise the Pact vouchsafed to Adam, to which Quran 20 (Ṭāhā): 115 refers, is concerned with the *walāya*.[70] It is the essential motive of all prophetic missions:

> "No prophet and no messenger has been appointed if not by (or "for") our *walāya* (*bi-walāyatinā*)."[71]
>
> "Our *walāya* is God's *walāya*. Every prophet has been sent (by God) but for/through it."[72]
>
> "The *walāya* of 'Alī is inscribed in all the books of the prophets; every messenger has been appointed but to proclaim the prophecy of Muḥammad and the *walāya* [or the *waṣiyya*] of 'Alī."[73]

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66   Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, ed. Mīrzā Kūčebāghī, section 2, chapters 6-16, Tabriz, 2nd ed. n.d. (around 1960) (= ed. K), pp. 67-90; new edition by 'A. Zakīzādeh Ranānī, vol. 1 (2 vols), with Persian translation, Qumm, 1391/2012 (= ed. Z), pp. 275-350. See also al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 26, p. 280 sqq. On al-Ṣaffār see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 4.

67   *Baṣā'ir*, section 2, chapters 7-12; see also footnote 54 above and the related text.

68   *Baṣā'ir*, section2, chapter 6, pp. 67-68 (ed. K); vol. 1, pp. 275-278 (ed. Z). For the technical term *tested one* taken from the expression *al-mu'min imtaḥana llāhu qalbahu li-l-īmān* (the believer – or initiated – whose heart God has tested for the faith), see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, index s.v. *imtiḥān* (*al-qalb*).

69   *Baṣā'ir*, section 2, chap. 8. On "the Worlds before the World", see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, part II-1, pp. 75 sqq.

70   *Baṣā'ir*, section 2, chap. 7, p. 70-71 (ed. K); vol. 1, pp. 284-292 (ed. Z). See above footnote 57 and related text; also M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, p. 212; M.M. Bar-Asher, "Variant Readings", p. 64.

71   *Baṣā'ir*, section 2, chap. 9, p. 74-75 (ed. K); vol. 1, pp. 299-302 (ed. Z).

72   *Baṣā'ir*, ibid., no. 7, p. 75 (ed. K); vol. 1, p. 301 (ed. Z); also *al-Uṣul al-sittat ashar*, Qumm, 2nd ed., 1405/1984, p. 60; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 26, p. 281, no. 30.

73   *Baṣā'ir*, section 2, chap. 8, p. 72, no. 1 (ed. K); vol. 1, p. 293, no. 1 (ed. Z). See also al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl*, kitāb al-ḥujja, vol. 1, p. 437; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 26, p. 280, no. 24; al-Qundūzī, *Yanābī' al-mawadda*, p. 82; al-Baḥrānī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, Qumm, s.d., p. 207.

The Quran, is its "original integral version", would have clearly mentioned this fact (as at 1.3 above, the passages 'restored' to the official version of the Quran are in italics):

Quran 42 (al-Shūrā) / 13: "He has laid down for you *oh Family of Muḥammad*, as religion that He charged Noah with, and that We have revealed to thee *oh Muḥammad*, and that We charged Abraham with, Moses and Jesus: 'Perform the religion *of the Family of Muḥammad* (i.e. the religion of the *walāya*), and scatter not regarding it. Very hateful is that for the idolaters, *those who associate to the walāya of ʿAlī*; that thou call them to *concerning the walāya of ʿAlī*. Surely, *oh Muḥammad*, God guides to this religion whoever repents, *who accepts your call toward the walāya of ʿAlī* (instead of: 'God chooses unto Himself whomsoever He will, and He guides to Himself whosoever turns, penitent.')."[74]

If Adam was driven from paradise it was because he had forgotten the *walāya*.[75] If the prophet Jonah was confined in the belly of the whale it was because he had, for a while, refused loyalty to the *walāya*.[76] If certain Israelites had been transformed into fish or lizards it is because they had neglected the *walāya*.[77] The point being that without *walāya* there is no religion. Without a revelation of God in the person of one of His Friends or without the divine Man making the Supreme Mystery manifest in his person and in his teachings, faith loses all meaning. Without the spirit the letter is dead and becomes a mere empty shell, a lifeless corpse. It therefore follows that Islam, the ultimate religion of the most perfect of prophets, should be even more than others centred on the *walāya*. Furthermore, if Muḥammad is Muḥammad, it is because he has been initiated even more deeply than the other prophets, and in particular during his ascensions to Heaven, to the mysteries of the *walāya* of the Imam, the divine Man symbolized by the cosmic ʿAlī: "'Alī is a Sign of God (*āya* – just as a verse of the Quran is) for Muḥammad. All he did was call (the people) to the *walāya* of ʿAlī."[78]

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74   Furāt al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr*, p. 387; al-Kulaynī, *al-Rawḍa min al-Kāfī*, text and Persian translation by H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī, Tehran 1389/1969, vol. 2, p. 163, no. 502; id., *Uṣūl*, kitāb al-ḥujja, vol. 2, p. 285, no. 32 (shorter version); al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Ṣāfī*, vol. 2, p. 509.

75   *Baṣāʾir*, section 2, chapters 7 to 12; also Ibn Bābūya, *Maʿānī l-akhbār*, ed. ʿA.A. Ghaffārī, Tehran, 1379/1959, pp. 107-109; Id., *al-Khiṣāl*, Najaf, 1391/1971, p. 246; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, 3 vols, Najaf, 1375-76/1956, vol. 1, p. 214.

76   Furāt al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr*, p. 94; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 14, p. 401 and vol. 26, pp. 333 sqq. See also M.M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis*, p. 200.

77   Al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 35; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 5, p. 345 and vol. 14, p. 55; al-Baḥrānī, *Burhān*, vol. 2, p. 44; M.M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis*, pp. 200-201.

78   *Baṣāʾir*, section 2, chap. 7, nos 5 et 8, pp. 71-72 (ed. K); p. 289 and 291 (ed. Z); and chap. 10, no. 5, p. 77 (ed. K); pp. 308-309 (ed. Z); Furāt, *Tafsīr*, pp. 121-122; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 3,

Commenting on Quran 94 (al-Sharḥ) / 1, on the prophetic vocation of Muḥammad, "(Oh Muḥammad) did We not expand thy chest for thee?", imam Jaʿfar is said to have proclaimed: "God expanded his chest for the *walāya* of ʿAlī."[79]

> "The angel Gabriel came to me, said the Prophet, and told me: 'Muḥammad! Your Lord extends to you the love (*ḥubb*) and the *walāya* of ʿAlī.'"[80]
>
> "The Prophet was elevated to heaven a hundred and twenty times; not a single time did that occur without God entrusting the *walāya* of ʿAlī and the imams (that follow) after him, far more than what He recommended to him regarding canonical duties."[81]
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> "The *walāya* of ʿAlī upon the Prophet is not earthly, it comes from heaven, from the very Mouth of God (*mushāfahatan*; i.e. a message received by Mohammed by word of mouth, orally without any intermediary during one of his ascensions to heaven)."[82]

In a solemn declaration attributed to the Prophet, he praises ʿAlī in terms that are clear allusions to his double nature, both human and divine:

> ... This is the most resplendent Guide, God's longest Lance, God's broadest Threshold; let him who seeks God enter across this Threshold ... Without ʿAlī, truth would not be distinguished from falsehood, nor the believer from the unbeliever; without ʿAlī, God could not have been worshipped ... No Screen (*sitr*) hides God from him, no Veil (*ḥijāb*) between God and him. Nay! ʿAlī himself is the Screen and the Veil ...[83]

In other traditions going back to ʿAlī himself, notably in a certain number of sermons said to have been given at the mosque of his capital Kūfa, the identity of the speaker switches, from one sentence to another, between his human

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p. 400, no. 150, vol. 23, p. 208, no. 1; vol. 35, p. 369, no. 14; al-Ḥuwayzī, *Tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn*, 4th ed., Qumm, 1412/1991, vol. 1, p. 595.

79   *Baṣā'ir*, section 2, chap. 8, no. 3, p. 73 (ed. K); p. 294-295 (ed. Z); al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 36, p. 95, no. 27.

80   *Baṣā'ir*, ibid. no. 9, p. 74 (ed. K); pp. 297-298 (ed. Z); al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 39, p. 273, no. 50.

81   *Baṣā'ir*, section 2, chap. 10, no. 10, p. 79 (ed. K); p. 314 (ed. Z); Ibn Bābūya, *al-Khiṣāl*, vol. 2, p. 600; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 23, p. 69, no. 4; al-Ḥuwayzī, *Tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn*, vol. 3, p. 98.

82   Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 28, p. 306, no. 13. Cf. Ibn al-Biṭrīq, *Khaṣā'iṣ*, p. 98 and Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Ṭarā'if fī maʿrifat madhāhib al-ṭawā'if*, Qumm, 1400/1979, p. 101.

83   Furāt al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr*, p. 371, no. 503.

person and his divine Face.[84] In them the first imam seems to boldly affirm his oneness with the cosmic Imam, the theophanic being who manifests in his own person God's Names and Attributes. Here we will restrict ourselves to two examples of those sermons. We shall return to them at length in chapter 4.

> "From the pulpit of the mosque of Kūfa, ʿAlī, the Commander of the initiated, declared: 'By God, I am the Retributor (*dayyān*) of men on the Day of Retribution; I am he who divides between the Garden and the Fire, none enters there without my division; I am the Supreme Judge (between good and evil; *al-fārūq al-akbar*) ... I possess the Sharp Word (*faṣl al-khiṭāb*); I have the penetrating Sight of the Way of the Book ... I possess the science of good and bad tidings and the science of judgements; I am the Completion of Religion; I am God's Benefaction for His creatures ...'"[85]
>
> "I am the queen bee (*yaʿsūb*) of the initiated; I am the First from among the Ancient; I am the successor of the Messenger of the Lord of the worlds; I am the Judge of the Garden and the Fire ..."[86]

In the following sermon, the Names of God mentioned in the Quran are in italics:

> ... I am the Secret of secrets ... I am the Face of God; I am the Eye of God; I am the Hand of God; I am the Tongue of God ... I am the Most Beautiful Names through which one invokes God ... I am the lord of primordial pre-eternity ... I am the master of the hermeneutics [of the Quran]; I am the commentator of the Gospel; I am the savant of the Torah ... I am *the First* (*al-awwal*); I am *the Last* (*al-ākhir*); I am *the Manifest* (*al-ẓāhir*); I am *the Hidden* (*al-bāṭin*) ... I am *the Creator* (*al-khāliq*); I am the Created; I am *the Giver* (*al-muʿṭī*); I am *the Taker* (*al-qābiḍ*) ... I am *the Compassionate* (*al-raḥmān*); I am *the Merciful* (*al-raḥīm*) ... I am the Lion [of the clan] of the Banū Ghālib; I am ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.[87]

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84   On these texts, their nature, number, titles and the sources that transmitted them see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Remarques sur la divinité de l'Imam" (= *La Religion discrète*, chap. 3). Here chap. 4.

85   Furāt, *Tafsīr*, p. 178, no. 230.

86   Al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, pp. 17-18, no. 42; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 3, p. 389. On ʿAlī as the "Head" or "Commander of the Bees" (*amīr al-naḥl*) see I. Goldziher, "Schiʿitisches", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 44 (1910), pp. 532-33, included in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. De Somogyi, Hildesheim, 1967-1970, vol. 5, pp. 213-14.

87   The text of the "Sermon of the Clear Declaration" (*khuṭbat al-bayān*) in the version transmitted by al-Kashfī Jaʿfar, *Tuḥfat al-mulūk*, s.l. (Iran), n.d., (ed. litho. in 2 vols),

It is in this doctrinal context that 'Alī (and after him the imams descended from him) is described in Shi'i works with Quranic expressions such as "the supreme Sign" (*al-āya al-kubrā*; Quran 79 [al-Nāzi'āt] / 20), "the most solid Handle" (*al-'urwa al-wuthqā*; Quran 2 [al-Baqara] / 256 and 31 [Luqmān] / 22), "the august Symbol" (*al-mathal al-a'lā*; Quran 16 [al-Naḥl] / 60) or titles such as "the Proof of God" (*ḥujjat allāh*), "the Way of God" (*ṣirāṭ allāh*), "the Vicar of God" (*khalīfat allāh*), "the Threshold of God" (*bāb allāh*), etc.[88]

6 Roots, Extensions and Questions on the Origins: 'Alī and Christ

The two natures of 'Alī, human and divine, were from early on expressed respectively by the terms *nāsūt* and *lāhūt*, words of Syriac origin which Arabic Christian texts use to describe the double nature of Christ.[89] And with good reason: the main doctrines of Shi'i imamology, indissolubly bound up with its theology and its prophetology, would seem to be the heirs of the christological speculations of various Neo-Platonizing Christian and Judeo-Christian currents in Late Antiquity, or to derive from both them and especially from a number of Gnostic movements and from Manichaeism.[90] The concept of the metaphysical cosmic Imam, the pre-existing being making manifest the luminous Word of God, and the celestial archetype of the earthly imam, seems to be rooted in the comments in the Gospel of John about the nature of Christ[91] and notably in the interpretations thereof by "the theologians of the Logos", Philo of Alexandria, Justin, Origen, Arius, etc. The status of 'Alī, at the same

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vol. 1, pp. 20-28; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Remarques sur la divinité de l'Imam", pp. 210-214 (= *La Religion discrète*, chap. 3, pp. 105-108).

88   The references are countless; we shall content ourselves with the following: al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā'ir*, section 2, all of chapter 3; Ibn Bābūya, *al-Amālī/al-Majālis*, ed. and Persian trans. by M.B. Kamareh'ī, Tehran, 1404/1984, "majlis" 9 and 10; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 22, pp. 212 sqq.; vol. 34, pp. 109 sqq.

89   L. Massignon, *La Passion de Hallâj, martyr mystique de l'Islam*, vol. 4 (4 vols), Paris, re-ed. 1975, index of technical terms, s.v. *lāhūt, lāhūtī, lāhūtiyya, nāsūt, nāsūtiyya*; R. Arnaldez, "Lāhūt et Nāsūt", *EI2*, s.v.; and the numerous and perceptive observations of D. De Smet in *Les Epîtres sacrées des Druzes*, Louvain, 2007, index. s.v.

90   See the now classical work by H. Halm, *Die islamische Gnosis. Die Extreme Schia und die 'Alawiten*, Zurich-Munich, 1982; more recently M. Asatryan, *Controversies in Formative Shi'i Islam. The Ghulat Muslims and Their Beliefs*, London-New York, 2017. See also, among others, T. Andrae, *Les origines de l'Islam et le Christianisme* (trans. fr. J. Roche), Paris, 1955; E. Rabbath, *L'Orient chrétien à la veille de l'Islam*, Beirut, 1989.

91   Notably verse 1, 15 where John the Baptist declares of Jesus: "Before me, He was" or also 8, 58 where Jesus himself says: "Truly, I tell you, before Abraham existed, I was (literally: 'I am')."

time the heavenly and the earthly Imam, the ontological intermediary between the divine and the human, has more than one analogy with a sequence of christological dogmas running from Saint Paul (e.g. Col 1, 15 or 2, 9) to *the Commentary on John* to Origen, the *Thalia* of Arius, and the speculations of Nestorius on the nature of Christ, not forgetting the christological and gnoseological doctrines of Mani, Bardaisan of Edessa or Marcion.[92] It is interesting to note that those movements were present in Sassanian Iraq, and in particular in the city of Ḥīra, a few centuries before and a few centuries after the advent of Islam. Now Iraq is the birthplace of Shiʿism, especially the city of Kūfa, near the ancient site of Ḥīra. Might this be the reason for the sudden – and enigmatic – transfer of the capital from Medina to Kūfa under the caliphate of ʿAlī?[93] The concept of *walāyat ʿAlī*, and its vehicle "the light of the *walāya/waṣiyya*", as well as its "journey" through the generations in order to rejoin the Allies of God, are reminiscent, sometimes in detail, of certain Judeo-Christian and Christian doctrines on the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the True Prophet or the Christology of the angel, that can be found among the Manicheans, the Montanists or the Monarchianists? They have been studied in detail in recent years, notably by Jan van Reeth.[94]

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92   There is practically no longer any doubt about the presence of this type of christological and gnostic doctrines in early Shiʿism. What is subject to debate are the milieux and the means of their transmission in the lands of Islam. See, amongst others, L. Massignon, "Die Ursprünge und die Bedeutung des Gnostizismus im Islam", *Eranos Jahrbuch 1937*, pp. 55-77 (included in Id., *Opera minora*, ed. Y. Moubarac, Beiruth, 1963, vol. 1, pp. 499-513); Id., "Der gnostische Kult der Fatima im schiitischen Islam", *Eranos Jahrbuch 1938*, pp. 161-173 (= *Opera minora*, vol. 1, pp. 514-522); H. Corbin, "De la gnose antique à la gnose ismaélienne", in *Oriente e Occidente nel Medioevo. Convegno di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, Rome, 1957, pp. 105-146 (included in Id., *Temps cyclique et gnose ismaélienne*, Paris, 1982, 3rd part); Id., "L'idée du Paraclet en philosophie iranienne", in *La Persia nel Medioevo*, Rome, 1971, pp. 37-68; U. Rubin, "Preexistence and Light", 1975 (see above footnote 63); H. Halm, *Kosmologie und Heislehre der frühen Ismāʿīliyya. Eine Studie zur islamischen Gnosis*, Wiesbaden, 1978; Id., "Das 'Buch der Schatten'. Die Mufaḍḍal-Tradition der ghulāt und die Ursprünge des Nuṣairiertums", *Der Islam* 55 (1978), pp. 219-265 and 58 (1981), pp. 15-86; D. De Smet, "Au-delà de l'apparent: les notions de *ẓāhir* et *bāṭin* dans l'ésotérisme musulman", *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 25 (1994), pp. 197-220; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, pp. 157-158, 204 sqq., 215 sq.

93   A question to which no satisfactory answer has yet been given; see on this subject J. van Reeth, "Ville céleste, ville sainte, ville idéale dans la tradition musulmane", *Acta Orientalia Belgica* 24 (2011), p. 125 and especially "*Le Coran silencieux et le Coran parlant*: nouvelles perspectives sur les origines de l'islam", *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 230/3 (juillet-septembre 2013), pp. 393-394.

94   See for example among many other earlier studies, J. van Reeth, "La cosmologie de Bardayṣān", *Parole de l'Orient* 31 (2006), pp. 133-144; Id., "La typologie du prophète selon le Coran: le cas de Jésus", in G. Dye et F. Nobilio (ed.), *Figures bibliques en islam*, Bruxelles,

Thus the figure of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is placed at the intersection of these spiritual doctrines and is its epicenter. It is thanks to his double nature that ʿAlī is pivotal to the spirituality of the different fields and groups of Islam, as both theophanic being and initiatory guide *par excellence*: all the different tendencies of Shiʿi faith, especially its imamology; mysticism, both Shiʿi and Sunni Sufism; the occult sciences; *futuwwa*; Shiʿi literature and religious art; the devotional practices of such movements as the ʿAlawi Nuṣayris of Syria, the Ḥurūfiyya, the Nuqṭawiyya, the Bābāʾī, the Bektāshis and the Turkish Alevis, the Mushaʿshaʿiyya, the Kurdish Ahl-e Ḥaqq/Yārersān ... To huge numbers of the Shiʿi faithful, however diverse their doctrines and practices, ʿAlī, the veritable manifestation of God, is superior not only to the other imams but also to the prophet Muḥammad. It is, for example, the case for many Alid sects of the first centuries of Islam (the Sabaʾiyya/Kaysāniyya, for the ʿAyniyya among the Mukhammisa, for the Nuṣayriyya Isḥāqiyya ...), for certain Ismailis, with their doctrine of ʿAlī as *asās*, superior to the *imām* and to the prophet/*nāṭiq*, and who consider the *walāya* to be the source of the prophetic mission, for the Druze as well as for present day mystical orders, for the Shaykhiyya and the Sufi Shiʿi brotherhoods (the Dhahabiyya, Niʿmatullāhiyya, Khāksāriyya and others), who believe the Prophet himself had called his followers to the *walāya* of ʿAlī, and so attesting to the superiority of the esoteric, the spiritual, of the *bāṭin*, of which ʿAlī is the symbol and spokesman, over the exoteric, the letter of the law, the *ẓāhir* of which he was himself the messenger. For these faithful, ʿAlī, the Seal of the universal *walāya*, who accompanied all earlier Messengers secretly and the prophet Muḥammad openly, is the locus of manifestation of the Supreme Name of God (*ism allāh al-aʿẓam/al-akbar*).[95]

Sunni historians of heresy, but also those Shiʿi authors who adhered to the post-Buyyid rationalistic tradition, accuse these doctrines of exaggeration (*ghuluww*) and those who profess them as extremists (*ghālin*, pl. *ghulāt*). The accusation is of course ideological in nature, but it does not stand up to critical historical examination. We have seen that these imamological ideas

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2011, pp. 81-105; Id., "Who is the 'Other' Paraclet?", in C.A. Segovia & B. Lourié (eds.), *The Coming of the Comforter: When, Where and to Whom? Studies on the Rise of Islam and Various Other Topics in Memory of John Wansbrough*, Piscataway, 2012, pp. 423-452. See also J. Barbel, *Christos Angelos*, Bonn, 1941; G. Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung des propheten Muḥammad. Eine Kritik am "christlichen" Abendland*, Erlangen, 1981; B.G. Bucur, *Angelomorphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and other early Christian witnesses*, Leiden, 2009.

95 The sources of these data are innumerable. One will find a pertinent synthesis in E. Kohlberg, art. "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭāleb, ii. ʿAlī as seen by the community", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 1, pp. 845-847; on those sources see here chap. 4. On these questions see also O. Mir-Kasimov's contribution to the present book.

are all omnipresent in the corpus of the so-called "moderate" Shiʿi traditions accepted as being authentic.[96] Consider the great Hadith collections, both ancient (III-V/IX-XIth c.) and modern (X-XIII/XVI-XIXth c.); important writers such as Ibn Shahrāshūb (d. 588/1192) and the great masters of the modern and contemporary mystical orders through to Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 794/1391-1392), Rajab al-Bursī (d. 814/1411), Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsāʾī (d. c. 906/1501); or the great Iranian philosophers of the Safavid era, Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640), Mullā Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1091/ 1680); or the great theoreticians of the ontological *walāya* (*al-walāya al-takwīniyya*), such as Mīrzā Rafīʿā Nāʾīnī (d. 1083/1672), ʿAbd al-Razzāq Lāhījī (d. 1032/1622), Mullā Naʿīmā Ṭāliqānī (d. after 1135/1722) or Mullā ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Damāvandī (d. 1160/1747).[97]

I would like to close this chapter with some questions, suppositions and hypotheses. I will outline them here summarily and as they come, leaving their more detailed examination to the next chapter. Shiʿism is the religion of the Imam just as Christianity is the religion of Christ. As with Jesus in Christianity, the Shiʿi doctrine of the Imam, its imamology, which decisively determines both its theology and its prophetology, is entirely centred on the figure of ʿAlī. In other words, for a millennium and a half, Shiʿism has been, and remains, the religion of ʿAlī, Man and manifestation of God, and supreme guide.[98] The

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96 On both early Imami traditions, pre- and post-Buyyid, and the arbitrary division between a "moderate" Shiʿism and an "extremist" Shiʿism, especially during the early period, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, introduction, pp. 13-58 and conclusion, pp. 312-317; Id., "al-Ṣaffâr al-Qummî (m. 290/902-3) et son Kitâb baṣâʾir al-darajât", *Journal Asiatique* 280/3-4 (1992), pp. 221-250 (enlarged and slightly modified version in *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 4); and now Id., "Les Imams et les Ghulāt. Nouvelles réflexions sur les relations entre imamisme 'modéré' et shiʿisme 'extrémiste'", in *Shii Studies Review* (2020), pp. 5-38.

97 On the great Imami Hadith compilations see E. Kohlberg, "Shīʿī Ḥadīth", in A.F.L. Beeston et al. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature I. Arabic Literature to the End of Umayyad Period*, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 299-307; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 48-58; Id., *Le Coran silencieux*, pp. 116-117. On the philosophers of the Safavid period and the ontological *walāya* (as opposed to the juridical *walāya* – *al-walāya al-tashrīʿiyya*, as claimed by the Doctors of the Law), see the study by S. Rizvi, "'Seeking the Face of God': the Safawid *Ḥikmat* Tradition's Conceptualisation of *Walāya Takwīniyya*", in F. Daftary & G. Miskinzoda (eds.), *The Study of Shiʿi Islam*, pp. 391-410 and also the contribution of M. Terrier to the present work.

98 In Sunnism, the evolution of the figure of ʿAlī is totally different. The Umayyad period, apart from a few parentheses, seems to be marked by a declared hatred of him, illustrated by the public cursing of ʿAlī and his progeny on the orders of those in power. In parallel, certain other "Companions" of the Prophet seem to have been elevated to the level of divine men most probably in order to suppress the Shiʿi image of ʿAlī; this seems to be particularly the case of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the historical adversary of ʿAlī, sanctified thanks to his image as the herp of the Arab conquests (See in particular A. Hakim, "ʿUmar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb, calife par la Grâce de Dieu", *Arabica* 54/3 (2008), pp. 317-336; Id., "ʿUmar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb: l'autorité religieuse et morale", *Arabica* 55/1 (2008), pp. 1-34). The arrival of the

figure of 'Alī, of and the doctrines which define him, thus possess very great spiritual power for a large, various, representative and widespread community of the faithful, even though they are in the minority, and this from the very beginnings of Islam until today.[99] Now it is difficult to conceive that such a religion, and such widespread devotion to it, could emerge from nowhere or be entirely based on a question of succession, be it that of a prophet. At this stage of the argument, many legitimate questions arise if one examines a few preliminary premises.

First: in numerous Shi'i traditions (we have already seen a few of them), prophet Muḥammad declares that the ultimate objective of his mission is to affirm the sacred nature of the person of 'Alī, and to call upon the faithful to follow his person and accept his teachings.

Second: in countless passages of the Quran, the message of Muḥammad is presented as being the prolongation and the culmination of previous mono-theistic religions, in this case Judaism and Christianity.

Third (and here I revive the old, unjustly neglected thesis of Paul Casanova, which deserves to be taken seriously): Dozens of the short final surahs of the Quran, deservedly called "apocalyptic", declare that Muḥammad came to announce the end times. This is also clearly attested, first by one of the titles of the Prophet to be found in some of the most ancient sources, namely that of *nabī* or *rasūl al-malḥama* ("the prophet/messenger of the end times calami-ties") and by many other traditions.[100]

Abbassids, at first Shi'is themselves, marked the end of the campaign of hatred against 'Alī but by "sunnifying" themselves out of political pragmatism, the new political estab-lishment would trivialize and recuperate him by placing him at the same level as the other three "rightly guided" caliphs and other henceforth canonized "Companions" of the Prophet (On the late inclusion of 'Alī as the fourth and last of the "rightly guided caliphs" (*al-khulafāʾ al-rāshidūn*), see W. Madelung, *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm und die Glaubenslehre der Zaiditen*, Berlin, 1965, pp. 225 sq; J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, vol. 3 (6 vols), Berlin-NewYork, 1991-1997, pp. 450 sqq. On the late development of the Sunni doctrine of the "sanctity" of the Companions (*ṣaḥāba*) of the Prophet, see A. Osman, "*'Adālat al-ṣaḥāba*: The Construction of a Religious Doctrine", *Arabica* 60/3-4 (2013), pp. 272-305).

99   One has to remember that even if the Alids, later on called Shi'is, have been in the minor-ity in the beginnings of Islam, they seem to have been at the centre of its history and its doctrinal development for the first three or four Hijra centuries. It was in fact towards the end of the 3rd/9th century, after centuries of violence and civil wars, that "Sunni ortho-doxy", of which numerous doctrines were developed in reaction to Shi'ism, now consid-ered as "heterodox", would be imposed on the majority of Muslims; see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, *passim* and in particular p. 128.

100 P. Casanova, *Mohammed et la fin du monde. Étude critique sur l'islam primitif*, Paris, 1911-1913 (2 vols + 1 vol. of notes) and 1924 (1 vol. of additional notes). According to Casanova, it is impossible for the Quran, an eminently eschatological and apocalyptic book – at

One could then propose the following hypothesis. Muhammad came to declare the end of the world; belonging to a biblical religious tradition, he could not remain silent about the central figure of biblical eschatology, namely the Saviour, the Messiah or Christ, the Anointed One (*al-masīḥ*). Now, according to some sources, ʿAlī was considered by some of his followers to be the Messiah of the end times. Hence the many explicit mentions in the original Quran of ʿAlī as the Ally of God *par excellence*, and their removal by his adversaries from the official version of the Quran. That is at least what the early Alids seem to have professed. We shall take a closer look at this matter in the following chapter.

least in the final Surahs of the extant version – and a prolongation of the holy books of the Judeo-Christian tradition, not to have said mentioned the figure of the Saviour. His astonishing absence from the Quran could be the result of later deletions by the caliphal authorities, since the messianic dimension of the Quran would have given it an all too Shiʿi character (*ibid.*, chapter VI, pp. 54-67 and chapter VII, pp. 68-69). These remarks by the French scholar, professor at the Collège de France, corroborate the early Shiʿi doctrine of *taḥrīf*, that large passages of the Quran had been deleted by the adversaries of the Alids, a Shiʿi doctrine Casanova does not seem to have been aware of. For a reminder of the importance of the work of Casanova see now F. Donner, *Muḥammad and the Believers: at the Origins of Islam*, Cambridge (Mass.), 2010, pp. 79-82 and especially S.J. Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muḥammad's Life and the Beginnings of Islam*, Philadelphia, 2012, pp. 118-196. See also J. van Reeth, "Muḥammad: le premier qui relèvera la tête", in A. Fodor (ed.), *Proceedings of the 20th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants* (*Arabist: Budapest Studies in Arabic* 26-27) (2003), pp. 83-96.

Muḥammad the Paraclete and ʿAlī the Messiah

To Patricia Crone
In Memoriam

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1   The End of the World in the Quran and the Hadith

The Quranic corpus insists heavily on the impending end of the world. Many
verses and surahs are more or less directly devoted to it. This is particularly the
case of a great number of the final surahs, the shorter ones, reputed to be the
oldest, which are in archaic language and in a remarkable literary style, close
to the rhymed prose (*saj*) that the pre-Islamic Arab seers were said to use in
their ecstatic visions. These difficult passages announce the dramatic cosmic
changes of the end times, invite incredulous mankind to repent and to purify
itself to be spared God's wrath, to keep in the straight way and so be num-
bered among the pious and the good, to whom salvation is promised. We will
limit ourselves to a few examples (translations follow A.J. Arberry, *The Koran
Interpreted*, London, 1964, with some modifications):

Quran 81 (The Darkening), 29 verses:[1] "In the Name of God, the Merciful,
the Compassionate. When the sun shall be darkened, when the stars shall be
thrown down, when the mountains shall be set moving, when the pregnant
camels shall be neglected, when the savage beasts shall be mustered, when
the seas shall be set boiling, when the souls shall be coupled (…) when heaven
shall be stripped off; when Hell shall be set blazing, when Paradise shall be
brought nigh, then shall a soul know what it has produced.(..) where then are

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[1] I wholeheartedly thank Guillaume Dye for his careful reading of the first draft of this study
and for his erudite and pertinent reflections. For the reasons that have just been mentioned,
the translation of these surahs (in French in the original version of the present study) turns
out to be particularly arduous. For example, just for the term that has given the most used
title for this surah, namely *al-takwīr*, Kasimirski proposes "le soleil ployé" (*Le Coran*, Paris
2010[8], p. 514), R. Blachère "l'Obscurcissement" (*Le Coran. Al-Qorʾân*, Paris, 1966[2], p. 638);
D. Masson, "le Décrochement" (*Le Coran*, Paris, 1967, vol. 2, p. 743), J. Berque, "le Reploiement"
(*Le Coran. Essai de traduction*, Paris, 1995[2], p. 664), etc.

you going? It is naught but a Reminder unto all beings, for whosoever of you who would go straight ...”

Quran 82 (The Splitting), 19 verses: “In the Name of God (...) When sky is split open, when the stars are scattered, when the seas swarm over, when the tombs are overthrown, then a soul shall know its works, the former and the latter. (...) but you cry lies to the Doom (...) Surely the pious shall be in bliss, and the libertines shall be in a fiery furnace roasting (...) And what shall teach thee what is the Day of Doom? Again, what shall teach thee what is the Day of Doom? A day when no soul shall possess ought to succour another soul; that day the Command shall belong unto God.”

Quran 84 (The Rending), 25 verses: “In the Name of God (...) When heaven is rent asunder and gives ear to its Lord, and is fitly disposed; when earth is stretched out and casts forth what is in it, and voids itself, and gives ear to its Lord, and is fitly disposed! O Man! Thou art labouring unto thy Lord laboriously, and thou shalt encounter Him. Then as for him who is given his book in his right hand, he shall surely receive an easy reckoning and he will return to his family joyfully. But as for him who is given his book behind his back, he shall call for destruction and he shall roast at a Blaze. (...) I swear by the twilight and the night and what it envelopes and the moon when it is at the full, you shall surely ride stage after stage. Then what ails them, that they believe not, and when the Koran is recited to them they do not bow? Nay, but the unbelievers are crying lies (...) So give them good tidings of a painful chastisement, except those that believe, and do righteous deeds theirs shall be a wage unfailing.”

Quran 99 (The Earthquake), 8 verses: “In the Name of God (...) When earth is shaken with a mighty shaking and earth brings forth her burdens, and Man says, ‘What ails her?’ (...) upon that coming day she shall tell her tidings for that her Lord has inspired her. Upon that day men shall issue in scatterings to see their works, and whoso has done an atom’s weight of good shall see it, and whoso has done an atom’s weight of evil shall see it.”

Quran 100 (The Chargers), 11 verses: “In the Name of God (...) By the snorting chargers, by the strikers of fire, by the dawn-raiders blazing a trail of dust, cleaving there with a host! Surely Man is ungrateful to his Lord, and surely he is a witness against that! Surely he is passionate in his love for good things. Knows he not that when that which is in the tombs is soon over-thrown, and that which is in the breasts is brought out surely on that coming day their Lord shall be aware of them!”

Quran 101 (The Clatterer), 11 verses: “In the Name of God (...) The Clatterer! What is the Clatterer? And what shall teach thee what is the Clatterer? The day that men shall be like scattered moths, and the mountains shall be like plucked wool tufts. Then he whose deeds weigh heavy in the Balance shall inherit a

pleasing life, but he whose deeds weigh light in the Balance shall plunge in the womb of the Pit. And what shall teach thee what is the Pit? A blazing Fire!"

Quran 102 (Rivalry), 8 verses: "In the Name of God (…) Gross rivalry diverts you, even till you visit the tombs. No indeed; but very soon you shall know. Again, no indeed; but very soon you shall know. No indeed; did you know with the knowledge of certainty, you shall surely see Hell; Again, you shall surely see it with the eye of certainty then you shall be questioned that day concerning true bliss."

The imminence of the end times is further alluded to in many readings. It is particularly stressed by the use of the term *al-sāʿa*, the Hour, in order to designate the coming of that end.[2] "The Hour has drawn nigh: the moon is split. Yet if they see a sign they turn away, and they say 'A continuous sorcery!' They have cried lies, and followed their caprices; but every matter is settled.[3] (…) yet warnings do not avail. So turn thou away from them. Upon the day when the Caller shall call unto a horrible thing, abasing their eyes, they shall come forth from the tombs as if they were scattered grasshoppers (…) The unbelievers shall say, 'This is a hard day!' (…)" (Quran 54:1-8).

"God it is who has sent down the Book with the truth, and also the Balance. And what shall make thee know? Haply the Hour is nigh. (…) Why, surely those who are in doubt concerning the Hour are indeed in far error." (Quran 42:17-18)

"Not equal are the blind and the seeing man, those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, and the wrong-doer. Little do you reflect. The Hour is coming, no doubt of it, but most men do not believe." (Quran 40:58-59)

"To God belongs the Unseen in the heavens and in the earth. And the matter of the Hour is as a twinkling of the eye, or nearer. Surely God is powerful over everything." (Quran 16:77)

The Quran frequently gives the impression that the main purpose of its revelation is to announce that the end times are imminent. Surah 21 thus begins with the words: "In the Name of God (…). Nigh unto men has drawn their reckoning, while they in heedlessness are yet turning away; no Remembrance from their Lord comes to them lately renewed, but they listen to it yet playing (…)". It is also the case at the beginning of surah 16: "God's command (*amrullāh*)

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2 The term means moment, instant, hour, very short time. Defined by the article *al-*, as it is in the Quran, it means the end of the world, but it also takes on the meaning of expressions signifying immediacy such as "immediately", "at once", "right away", still today in Modern Arabic.

3 *Wa kullu amrin mustaqarr.* On the apocalyptic and eschatological dimensions of the difficult Quranic term *amr* (rendered here as "matter"), see J. Bajlon, "The *Amr* of God in the Qurʾān", *Acta Orientalia* 22 (1958), pp. 7-18; M.J. Kister, "A Booth like the Booth of Moses … A Study of an Early *Ḥadīth*", *BSOAS* 25 (1962), pp. 150-155; D. Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, Princeton, 2002, pp. 271-272; S.S. Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet. The End of Muḥammad's Life and the Beginnings of Islam*, Philadelphia, 2012, index *s.v.*

comes; so seek not to hasten it." One can also stress the use of the term *āzifa* for the Judgement, suggesting an event that is imminent or approaching with great speed, something that occurs suddenly: "And warn them against the Day of the Imminent (*yawm al-āzifa*) when, choking with anguish, the hearts are in the throats and the evil-doers have not one loyal friend, no intercessor to be heeded." (Quran 40:18) "Then which of thy Lord's bounties disputest thou? This is a warner, of the warners of old. The Imminent is imminent (*azifati l-āzifa*); apart from God none can disclose it." (Quran 53:57) Furthermore the coming of the End of the World is described with the qualifier *wāqiʿa*, literally "falling, in the process of falling" (Quran 52:7 and 70:1). The list is not exhaustive.

What is more, in some passages, the signs of Judgement Day are already there: "… But those who are guided aright, them He increases in guidance, and gives them their godfearing. Are they looking for aught but the Hour, that it shall come upon them suddenly? Already its tokens have come (…)" (Quran 47:17-18) Thus, those who witnessed the revelation shall also witness the Hour in their lifetime: "Whosoever is in error, let the All-merciful prolong his term for him! Till, when they see that they were threatened, whether the chastisement, or the Hour (…)" (Quran 19:75); "But they disbelieved in it; soon they shall know! (…) So turn thou from them for a while, and see them; soon they shall see! What, do they seek to hasten Our chastisement? When it lights in their courtyard, how evil will be the morning of them that are warned! (…)." (Quran 37:170-177)

Examples like these from the Quran recur frequently on many other pages. They, along with many similar examples in the corpus of the hadith (to which I shall return), have led some scholars, from the 19th century onwards, to consider the Quran, the society in which it was written and the whole early Islamic period, to be peculiar to that period and region (in other words to a history and a geography) strongly steeped in apocalyptic beliefs. The questions raised by these scholars have deeply affected the issues, the perspectives of, and the methods of research into, the birth of the Arab religion: if Muḥammad had come to announce the end of the world, as much of the Quran and the Hadith affirms he did, why would he found a new religion? To which religious milieu(s) did he belong? How far was its conception and message influenced by Judaism, Christianity or Manicheism, the major religions in that time and place? How should we understand the other, non-apocalyptic, parts of the two scriptural sources of Islam? How did the first Muslims, the men of power and knowledge in particular, relate to their prophet? How much confidence can be had in the Islamic sources, at once so abundant and so contradictory, so full of improbabilities and often so patently tendentious and/or ideological? How do we reconcile accounts of the beginnings of Islam and of the Arab conquests from contemporary non-Islamic sources that are prone to be equally biased?

I draw attention here to the authors of the most significant studies of the apocalyptic dimension of the Quran and of the Hadith as well as of the figure of Muḥammad. They are: Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, especially his study of the Mahdist movements and in his debate with Hubert Grimme;[4] Paul Casanova, who wrote the best documented and most solidly argued book of his time and this despite the fact that many sources which would have supported his theses were not yet known;[5] Tor Andrae, in particular in his fundamental study of the origins of Islam;[6] Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, in *Hagarism*, their momentous collaborative work;[7] Suliman Bashear, in many articles on the apocalyptic aspects of Islam;[8] David Cook, in many articles and in numerous passages of his valuable monography on the same subject;[9] Said Amir-Arjomand, in particular in three illuminating articles;[10] Edouard-Marie

4   C. Snouck Hurgronje, "Der Mahdi", *Revue coloniale internationale* 1 (1886), pp. 239-273; id. "Une nouvelle biographie de Mohammed", *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 15, n° 30 (1894), pp. 48-70 and 149-178 (reply to H. Grimme, *Mohammed*, Münster, 1892) (these two articles were republished in *Verspreide Geschriften van C. Snouck Hurgronje*, ed. A.J. Wensinck, Bonn-Leipzig, 1923-1927).

5   P. Casanova, *Mohammed et la fin du monde. Étude critique sur l'Islam*, Paris, 1911-1913 [1924].

6   T. Andrae, "Der Ursprung des Islams und das Christentum", *Kyrkohistorisk Årsskrift* 23 (1923), pp. 149-206; 24 (1924), pp. 213-292 [our subject is particularly discussed on pages 213-247]; and *ibid.*, 25 (1925), pp. 45-112 (French translation by J. Roche: *Les origines de l'Islam et le Christianisme*, Paris, 1955, especially pp. 67-100); see also id., *Mohammed: The Man and His Faith*, transl. T.W. Menzel, New York, 1960, pp. 53 sqq. (English translation of *Mohammed, sein Leben und sein Glaube*, Göttingen, 1932).

7   P. Crone & M. Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*, Cambridge, 1977. Apart from this study, both scholars have returned to the subjects of their theses, in more or less developed forms, in many other publications.

8   S. Bashear, "The Title 'Fārūq' and Its Association with ʿUmar I", *SI* 72 (1990), pp. 47-70; "Apocalyptic and Other Materials on Early Muslim-Byzantine Wars: A Review of Arabic Sources", *JRAS* 1 (1991), pp. 173-207; "Riding Beast on Divine Missions: An Examination of the Ass and Camel Traditions", *JSS* 37 (1991), pp. 37-75; "Muslim Apocalypses and the Hour: A Case-Study in Traditional Reinterpretation", *IOS* 13 (1993), pp. 75-100; works now assembled in the collection of articles by the author: *Studies in Early Islamic Tradition*, Jerusalem, 2004.

9   D. Cook, "Muslim Apocalyptic and *Jihād*", *JSAI* 20 (1996), pp. 66-105; "Muslim Materials on Comets and Meteorites", *Journal of the History of Astronomy* 30 (1999), pp. 131-160; "Messianism and Astronomical Events during the First Four Centuries of Islam", in M. Garcia Arenal (ed.), *Mahdisme et millénarisme en Islam*, n° spécial *REMMM* 91-94 (2000-2001), pp. 29-52; and the monograph that, apart from new studies, includes in part some material of these articles: *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, Princeton, 2002.

10 S. Amir Arjomand, "The Consolation of Theology: Absence of the Imam and Transition from Chiliasm to Law in Shiʿism", *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 76, no. 4 (1996), pp. 548-571; "Messianism, Millennialism and Revolution in Early Islamic History", in A. Amanat & M.T. Bernhardsson (eds.), *Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle*

Gallez whose voluminous work *Le Messie et Son Prophète*, is a true mine of information, despite some ideological positions and methods that may invite reserves;[11] and, finally, Stephen S. Shoemaker in his very solidly documented work on disagreements over the date of the death of Muḥammad and their many serious implications.[12]

Each of these studies has provoked many learned reactions, admirative, critical and at times downright hostile. My mention of them does not mean that I fully endorse all of their methods or conclusions. However, to say the very least, these researches, based as they are on serious and pertinent scholarship, and on solid philological and historical methods, have undeniably renewed scientific debates on the origins of Islam and have durably influenced them, when some of them had long been unjustly neglected. The present work is a modest attempt to prolong and complement our understanding of the problems they have studied.

To briefly return to the Hadith: the scholars mentioned above, with others less systematically, have drawn largely on the corpus to support the thesis that the imminent end of the word was the original core of the message of Muḥammad. Here I will confine myself to a few significant examples. There is first "the hadith of the two fingers". According to the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), the Prophet is said to have declared: "The Hour is coming. My coming and the Hour are separated from one another like these two" and he showed his index and his middle finger.[13] In his book on the life of Muḥammad, Aloys Sprenger examines the same hadith in the light of an incident recorded by Ibn ʿAbbās and mentioned by al-Wāḥidī (d. 411/1020-1021). According to this, after the revelation of the verse "the Hour is coming" (Quran 54:1) the unbelievers were at first anxious, but then, noticing that nothing had happened, they resumed their dissolute lives. God then revealed the verse: "Nigh unto men has drawn their reckoning, while they in heedlessness are yet turning away" (Quran 21:1). The unbelievers responded as before, their initial anxiety

East to Modern America, London, 2002 (2014), pp. 106-125; "Origins and Development of Apocalypticism and Messianism in Early Islam: 610-750 CE", in id., *Sociology of Shiʿite Islam*, Leiden, 2016, Part 1, ch. 1, pp. 23-40.

11   E.-M. Gallez, *Le messie et son prophète. Aux origines de l'islam*, volume 1: "De Qumrân à Muhammad" & volume 2: "Du Muhammad des Califes au Muhammad de l'histoire", Paris, 2007-2008.

12   S.S. Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet*, Philadelphia, 2012 (already quoted), especially chapter 3, pp. 118-196 which contains a very useful bibliographical overview on this subject. See also now his article: "'The Reign of God Has Come': Eschatology and Empire in Late Antiquity and Early Islam", *Arabica* 61.5 (2014), pp. 514-558, as well as his more recent work *The Apocalypse of Empire. Imperial Eschatology in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, Philadelphia, 2018.

13   Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, Beirut, 1969, 6 vols., vol. 3, pp. 310-311.

giving way to subsequent indifference. Then the following verse was revealed: "God's command (*amr*) comes; so seek not to hasten it." (Quran 16:1) Then the Messenger of God declared: "My coming and the Hour are separated from one another as are my index and my middle finger."[14]

Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845) writes in his *Ṭabaqāt* that Muḥammad had been sent at the same time as the advent of the Hour in order to warn his people of the coming of a grave chastisement.[15] Casanova cites another prophetic hadith in the *Khiṭaṭ* of al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442): "My coming and that of the Hour are coincident; the Hour almost preceded me."[16] The same al-Maqrīzī, quoting al-Kindī (d. 260/873-874), reports these words of Muḥammad addressing his people: "Compared to the peoples that have preceded you, the time that is left for you to live is like the white hair on the hide of the black bull (or the black hair on the hide of a white bull)", meaning an extremely short time.[17]

Yet again, according to the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, Muḥammad is said to have received his mission at the coming of the Hour.[18] The same scholar and his contemporary, the great traditionist Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849) describe a prophetic tradition where Muḥammad declares: "Those who see me or hear my words will see al-Dajjāl (the Islamic Antichrist) during their lifetime."[19] In

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14 A. Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Moḥammad*, Berlin, 1869², vol. 1, p. 533 (let us stress the fact that this tradition shows once again, if there still was any need, how in the composition of the Quran the chronological order of the revelations has been disrupted). Tradition analysed at length by Casanova, *Mohammed et la fin du monde*, pp. 15sqq.; also Shoemaker, *The Death of A Prophet*, pp. 172-173. In the same chapter of his work (pp. 535-536), Sprenger mentions another prophetic tradition where Muḥammad, pointing at a young man, said: "before he becomes old the Hour will come". For ancient sources for this tradition (Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Kitāb al-Muṣannaf fī l-aḥādīth wa l-āthār*, ed. al-Afghānī-al-Nadwī, 15 vols., Bombay, 1979-1983, vol. 15, p. 168; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 3, pp. 192, 213, 228, 269, 283; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 5 vols., Beirut, 1995, vol. 4, pp. 1495-1496) see Bashear, "Muslim Apocalypses", p. 89 and the analysis of Shoemaker, *Death of a Prophet*, p. 174. On the disbelief of the opponents of Muḥammad and the eschatological replies of the Quran see M. Azaiez, "Les contre-discours eschatologiques dans le Coran et le traité de Sanhédrin. Une réflexion sur les formes de la polémique coranique" in F. Déroche, C. Robin and M. Zinc (eds.), *Les origines du Coran, le Coran des origines*, Paris, 2015, pp. 111-127.

15 Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, ed. E. Sachau, 9 vols., Leiden, 1904-1908, vol. 1.1, p. 65; Casanova, *op.cit.*, p. 3 sqq.; Shoemaker, *op.cit.*, p. 172.

16 I use the (French) translation of Casanova, "Description historique et topographique de l'Égypte", 3rd part, *Mémoires de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire*, 3 (1906), p. 18; id., *Mohammed*, p. 18. For other, more ancient sources of this tradition as well as the one according to which "Muḥammad has been sent on the breath of the Hour" see Kister, "A Booth like the Booth of Moses", p. 152; Bashear, "Muslim Apocalypses", p. 78.

17 Casanova/al-Maqrīzī, "Description", p. 20; id., *Mohammed*, p. 17.

18 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 2, pp. 50 and 90.

19 Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol. 15, pp. 135 et 168; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 1, p. 195; for these sources and others see D. Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, p. 4 and note 7.

their studies mentioned above, Kister, Bashear, Cook and Shoemaker, to cite only them, tell of other stories along those lines taken from the *Sīra*. As for Casanova, he examines a great number of texts and passages taken from the "biographies" of the Prophet or from more or less ancient historiographical works where Muḥammad is called "the prophet of the end times" (*nabī ākhir al-zamān*) or also "the prophet/messenger of the calamities of the end of the world" (*nabī/rasūl al-malḥama* or *nabī al-malāḥim*).[20]

I will not enter here the rather futile debate about the whether the Quran is more eschatological than apocalyptic (Andrew Rippin, David Cook, Fred Donner)[21] or, instead, fundamentally apocalyptic (Carlos Segovia).[22] Both dimensions are very much present, as we have just seen. Michel Cuypers considers, in my eyes quite correctly, that the last 35 surahs, with a few exceptions, are apocalyptic and he shows it quite convincingly.[23] What matters here for our purpose is that the surahs and the Quranic passages, the hadiths and the narrations that we have examined all most probably originate in the time of Muḥammad himself, of his immediate entourage, or very slightly later. Given that the coming of the Hour had finally not taken place and that the world has not yet ended, it would have been futile for later Muslim scholars or currents to invent these types of text and attribute them to Muḥammad, for would have lost all credibility and all prophetic legitimacy by it. That is the central argument of Casanova and more recently that of Shoemaker in support of their thesis that the announcement of the end times was in fact the main message of the Muḥammadan mission, one which subsequent Muslim authorities had every interest in concealing. I shall return to this.

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20   Casanova, *Mohammed*, footnote 3 on p. 18, pp. 206-213. Apart from the sources used by Casanova, see also al-Maqrīzī, *Imtāʾ al-asmāʾ bi mā li-rasūl allāh min al-abnāʾ wa l-amwāl wa l-ḥafaḍa wa l-matāʾ*, ed. M.ʿA.Ḥ. al-Namīsī, 15 vols., Beirut, 1420/1999, vol. 1, p. 5, vol. 2, p. 143-144 and 146; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāya fī gharīb al-ḥadīth*, ed. al-Zāwī-al-Ṭīnāḥī, 5 vols., Cairo, 1963-1966, vol. 4, p. 240. On the *malḥama*, plural *malāḥim*, see D.B. MacDonald, "Malāḥim", *EI2*, *s.v.*

21   A. Rippin, "The Commerce of Eschatology" in S. Wild (ed.), *The Qurʾān as Text*, Leiden, 1996, pp. 125-136; D. Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, p. 301; F. Donner, "Was Early Islam an Apocalyptic Movement?", (*non vidi*) quoted by Cook, *ibid.*, note 79.

22   C. Segovia, "Thematic and Structural Affinities Between 1 Enoch and the Qurʾān: A Contribution to the Study of the Judaeo-Christian Apocalyptic Setting of the Early Islamic Faith" in C. Segovia and B. Lourié (eds.), *The Coming of the Comforter: When, Where and to Whom? Studies on the Rise of Islam and Various Other Topics in Memory of John Wansbrough*, Piscataway, 2012, pp. 231-267, *passim* and in particular p. 240 and footnote 50 (reference to the introduction of J.J. Collins to his collective work, *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, Missoula, 1979, pp. 1-20). See also J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination. An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, Cambridge, 1998².

23   M. Cuypers, *Une apocalypse coranique: une lecture des trente-trois dernières sourates du Coran*, Pendé (France), 2014.

2 Remarks on the Religious Environment of Muḥammad

Another major historical element corroborating this thesis is that the period and the region of the world that saw the birth of Muḥammad and his message (the period from the first half of the 6th century to the first half of the 7th century, in the vast regions now known as the Near and Middle East), are strongly marked by the intense apocalyptic expectations present in all the religious traditions. The ceaseless bloody wars between the Byzantines and the Sassanians, and to a lesser degree, the violent conflicts and bloodshed from Ethiopia to Yemen, with their lot of massacres, destructions, population displacements, epidemics and diseases, the defeated of yesterday becoming the victors of tomorrow, all created a world full of uncertainty and anxiety. Messianic uprisings were frequent, especially among the Jews, who sought to liberate Jerusalem from Byzantine domination and to rebuild the Temple; in 530, in Palestine, under the leadership of Julian, who proclaimed himself Messiah; in 602 at Antioch where the Christian patriarch and thousands of the faithful were killed; Heraclius under whom the Jewish uprisings ended in the occupation of Palestine by the Persians between 614 and 628.[24] Apocalyptic Jewish writings such as the "Apocalypse of Zorobabel" or "The Secrets of Rabbi Shimʿôn ben Yohai" had a great deal of religious influence among certain Jews who impatiently expected the deliverance of Jerusalem and who, after the coming of Muḥammad, would have considered the latter as the providential instrument of that liberation.[25] Apocalyptic beliefs were also present among Zoroastrian Sassanian circles of that time, as appears in texts (whose precise dating is, however, problematic) such as the *Zand-ī Wahman Yasn*, the *Jāmāsp*

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24   See for example A. Couret, *La prise de Jérusalem par les Perses en 614. Trois documents nouveaux*, Orléans, 1896, introduction; J.-G. Février, *La religion des palmyréniens*, Paris, 1931, pp. 219sqq. (who quotes ancient authors such as Théophanes, Zonaras, Cedrenus …); F.-M. Abel, *Histoire de la Palestine depuis la conquête d'Alexandre jusqu'à l'invasion arabe*, Paris, 1952, pp. 386sqq.; G. Dagron, "L'Église et la chrétienté byzantines" in J.-M. Mayeur, Ch. Pietri, A. Vauchez et M. Venard (eds.), *Histoire du christianisme*, Paris, vol. 4, 1993, pp. 70sqq.; A.-L. De Prémare, *Les fondations de l'islam. Entre écriture et histoire*, Paris, 2002, pp. 160 sqq.

25   Generally speaking, the secondary literature on these types of writings, be it in the Judaism or the Christianity of the period is immense. On the first source see for example I. Lévi, "L'Apocalypse de Zorobabel", *Revues des Études Juives* 68 (1914), 129-160; 69 (1919), pp. 108-121; 70 (1920), pp. 57-65; English translation and analysis by M. Himmelfarb, "Sefer Zerubbabel" in D. Stern and M. Jay Mirski (eds.), *Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature*, Philadelphia, 1990, pp. 67-90. On the second source see for example B. Lewis, "An Apocalyptic Vision of Islamic History", BSOAS 13 (1950), pp. 308-338 (in particular pp. 321-330); P. Crone, M. Cook, *Hagarism*, pp. 4sqq.; J.C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader*, Leiden, 2006, pp. 76-89; Shoemaker, *Death of A Prophet*, pp. 27-33.

Nāmag or the history of the Armenian Sebêos.[26] But the most numerous sources of that kind are from Christian authors, especially in Syriac, some of them dating from a few years after the Arab conquests and provoked by them: the *Testament of the Twelve Apostles*, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodus*, the *Apocalypse of Baḥīrā*, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Esdras*, the *Sermon on the End Times* of Pseudo-Ephrem, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Athanasius*, etc.[27] The emergence of a new prophet among the Arabs, the spectacular conquests of the latter within the two greatest empires of the region and the civil wars opposing the followers of Muḥammad to each other, form a significant part of the apocalyptic doctrines appearing and written down after the coming of the latter.[28]

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26   See for example Carlo G. Cereti's introduction to his edition and translation of the *Zand-ī Wahman Yasn. A Zoroastrian Apocalypse*, Rome, 1995; T.W. Greenwood, "Sassanian Echoes and Apocalyptic Expectations: A Re-evaluation of the Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos", *Le Muséon* 115 (2003), pp. 323-397; F. Grenet, "I) Le rayonnement de l'eschatologie et de l'apocalyptique iraniennes; II) Le *Zand î WahmanYasn*", *École Pratique des Hautes Etudes, section des Sciences Religieuses, Annuaire*, vol. 115, 2006-2007, pp. 103-109 et vol. 116, 2007-2008, pp. 109-112; D. Agostini, "La conquête arabe de l'Iran et la chute du zoroastrisme: processus eschatologique ou réalité historique? Une réponse d'après les sources pehlevies" in E. Aubin-Boltanski et C. Gauthier (eds.), *Penser la fin du monde*, Paris, 2014, pp. 147-165. See also F. Cumont, "La fin du monde selon les mages occidentaux", *RHR* 103 (1931), pp. 80-99.

27   See for example S.P. Brock, "Syriac Views of Emergent Islam" in G.H.A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society*, Carbondale-Edwardsville, 1982, pp. 9-21 and 199-203; P.J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, Berkely, 1985; F.J. Martinez, "Eastern Christian Apocalyptic in the Early Muslim Period: Pseudo-Methodus and Pseudo-Athanasius", unpublished doctoral thesis, The Catholic University of America, 1985; A. Palmer, S. Brock and R.G. Hoyland (eds.), *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, Liverpool, 1993; P. Ubierna, "Recherches sur l'apocalyptique syrienne et byzantine au VIIᵉ siècle: la place de l'Empire romain dans une histoire du salut", *Bulletin du Centre d'Études Médiévales d'Auxerre* (*BUCEMA*), hors série n° 2 (2008); B. Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam*, Leiden, 2009; many articles (M. Debié, L. Greisiger, H. Suermann, etc.), in D. Thomas, B. Roggema *et alii* (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, volume I (600-900)*, Leiden-Boston, 2009. Also the volume edited by P. Canivet and J.-P. Rey-Coquais, *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam, VIIᵉ-VIIIᵉ siècles. Actes du colloque international Lyon-Maison de l'Orient Méditerranéen et Paris – Institut du Monde Arabe, 11-15 septembre 1990*, Damascus, 1992; as well E. van Donzel and A.B. Schmidt, *Gog and Magog in Early Syriac and Islamic Sources: Sallām's Quest for Alexander's Wall*, Leiden-Boston, 2009; S. Shoemaker, "'The Reign of God Has Come'", pp. 541 sqq.

28   On these questions generally speaking see for example P. Crone, M. Cook, *Hagarism*, *passim*; H. Suermann, "Muḥammad in Christian and Jewish Apocalyptic Expectations", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 5 (1994), pp. 12-27; R.G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on*

The apocalyptic nature of the Quran is thus, in a sense, part a rich and wide-spread literature typical of the period. And for good reasons. Precisely at this period Arabia was heavily influenced by monotheistic biblical culture. This must have been the case in region of Hijaz, in spite of an almost total lack of material proof, an absence doubtless caused by the systematic destruction of all pre-Islamic remains in the region by the Saudi authorities. Contrary to what later Muslim apologists maintained, pre-Islamic Arabia was not an "era of ignorance" (*al-jāhiliyya*) and idolatry, nor was Islam at the origin of Arab monotheism. In all probability, idolatry had no longer existed there for many centuries, except among a few non-sedentary Bedouins.[29] And the message of Muḥammad was directed to the towns, the centres of a non-Bedouin tribal culture. Apart from the existence of numerous epigraphical, archaeological and historical proofs, especially outside the Hijāz, which the numerous studies by scholars like Frederic Imbert, Christian Robin or Jan Retsö have documented, the most evident textual confirmations are to be found in the Quran itself: the overwhelming presence there of figures from the Old and New Testaments, the allusive references to biblical narratives which would have been completely unintelligible had the audience not known them well, the onomastics of the biblical characters, derived from those of Oriental Christianities of Syro-Palestinian culture, the Hebrew, Aramean and Syriac roots of technical terms as fundamental as *Qurʾān, sūra, āya, zakāt* and *ṣalāt* or *ḥajj* and *ʿumra*, the role of Ethiopian Christianity, and so on…. The phenomenon has been extensively studied by many specialists of various disciplines in hundreds of works, of which the synthesis is yet to be undertaken.[30]

And Muḥammad? What was the religious setting of his birth and his education? Which religious traditions were at the source of his spirituality? What is the origin of the many characters and biblical or parabiblical texts of the Quran, whose occurrences can be counted by the hundreds? For

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Early Islam, Princeton, 1997, especially pp. 275-335; Shoemaker, *Death of A Prophet*, ch. 1, pp. 18-72; many articles in E. Aubin-Boltanski et C. Gauthier (eds.), *Penser la fin du monde*.

29   See G. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History*, Cambridge, 1999; P. Crone, "How Did the Quranic Pagans Make a Living?", *BSOAS* 68 (2005), pp. 387-399; C.J. Robin, "L'Arabie préislamique" in M.A. Amir-Moezzi & G. Dye (eds.), *Le Coran des historiens*, Paris, 2019, vol. 1, pp. 51-154; id., "Allāh avant Muḥammad", *JSAI* 49 (2020), pp. 1-145.

30   See M. Kropp (ed.), *Results of Contemporary Research on the Qurʾān. The Question of a Historico-critical Approach*, Beirut-Würzburg, 2007; G.S. Reynolds, *The Quran and Its Biblical Subtext*, London, 2010; id. (ed.), *The Quran in Its Historical Context*, London, vol. 1, 2008 and vol. 2, 2011; G. Dye et F. Nobilio (eds.), *Figures bibliques en islam*, Brussels-Fernelmont, 2011; F. Déroche, C.J. Robin & M. Zink (eds.), *Les origines du Coran, le Coran des origines*, Paris, 2015.

almost a century and a half many questions have been raised, many theories
and theses been advanced around these subjects, there again in innumer-
able works, without any definite conclusions being arrived at. One or many
forms of Judaism?[31] Different Christian currents such as non-Nicean and
non-Chalcedonean, that is to say, above all non-trinitarian (Nestorianism?
Arianism? Monarchianism? Montanism?)?[32] Heterodox tendencies within
Manicheism?[33] One could also imagine a syncretism between several of these

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31   It is obviously impossible to list, in this footnote and those which follow it, the complete
     bibliography of these issues, which is enormous. Moreover, they are intimately related
     to each other. We will therefore settle for some important titles (see also footnotes 24
     and sqq.). On the influence of Judaism see for example D.S. Margoliouth, *The Relations
     Between Arabs and Israelites Prior to the Rise of Islam*, London, 1924; Sh.D. Goitein, *Jews
     and Arabs: Their Contacts Through the Ages*, New York, 1955; A.I. Katsch, *Judaism and
     the Koran: Biblical and Talmudic Backgrounds of the Koran and Its Commentaries*, New
     York, 1962; Crone-Cook, *Hagarism, passim*; M. Lecker, *Jews and Arabs in Pre- and Early
     Islamic Arabia*, Aldershot, 1998; H. Busse, *Islam, Judaism and Christianity: Theological and
     Historical Affiliations*, Princeton, 1998; U. Rubin, *Between Bible and Qurʾān: the Children
     of Israel and the Islamic Self-image*, Princeton, 1999; H. Bar-Zeev, *Une lecture juive du
     Coran: Essai*, Paris, 2005; Many articles in A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai & M. Marx (eds.), *The
     Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu*, Leiden,
     2010;H. Mazuz, *The Religious and Spiritual Life of the Jews of Medina*, Leiden, 2014; see also
     the very recent J. Costa, "ʿ*Olam ha-zel/ʿolam ha-ba, al-dunyā/al-ākhira*: étude comparée de
     deux couples de termes dans la littérature talmudique et le Coran", *Arabica* 62.2-3 (2015),
     pp. 234-259.

32   See for example T. Andrae, *Les origines de l'Islam et le Christianisme*; R. Bell, *The Origin
     of Islam and Its Christian Environment*, London, 1926; K. Ahrens, "Christliches im Quran",
     ZDMG 48 (1930), pp. 15-68 et 148-190; D. Thomas and B. Roggema (eds.), *Christian Muslim
     Relations*; many article by S.H. Griffith some of which are now published in *The Church in
     the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*, Princeton 2008;
     many articles by C. Gilliot of which, among the most recent: "Mohammed's Exegetical
     Activity in the Meccan Arabic Lectionary" in C. Segovia and B. Lourié (eds.), *The Coming
     of the Comforter*, pp. 371-398; many works by G. Gobillot of which, among the most recent:
     "Des textes pseudo-clémentins à la mystique juive des premiers siècles et du Sinaï à
     Maʿrib" in C. Segovia and B. Lourié (eds.), *Op.cit.*, pp. 3-89; many articles by J. Van Reeth, of
     which, among the most recent: "Les prophéties oraculaires dans le Coran et leurs antécé-
     dents: Montan et Mani" in D. De Smet et M.A. Amir-Moezzi (eds.), *Controverses sur les
     Ecritures canoniques de l'islam*, pp. 77-145; same remark regarding multiple collective
     works and an article by G. Dye, of which, among the most recent: "Lieux saints communs,
     partagés ou confisqués: aux sources de quelques péricopes coraniques (*Q* 19: 16-33)" in
     I. Dépret et G. Dye (eds.), *Partage du sacré: transferts, dévotions mixtes, rivalités inter-
     confessionnelles*, Bruxelles, 2012, pp. 55-121; many contributions in J.C. Reeves (ed.), *Bible
     and Qurʾān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, Atlanta, 2003; M.H. Zellentin, *The Qurʾān's
     Legal Culture: the Didascalia Apostolorum as a Point of Departure*, Tübingen, 2013.

33   See for example M. Gil, "The Creed of Abū ʿĀmir", *IOS* 12 (1992), pp. 9-57; R. Simon, "Mānī
     and Muḥammad", *JSAI* 21 (1997), pp. 118-141; M. Sfar, *Le Coran, la Bible et l'Orient ancien*,
     Paris, 1998, *passim* and especially chapters 9 et 11; J. Van Reeth, "La *zandaqa* et le prophète

religious traditions. Of course, there is no question of going into a detailed discussion of such a complex subject, one that would lead us astray from our purpose. All the same, the most probable hypothesis seems to be the one formulated by Alfred-Louis de Prémare as "a more or less defined affiliation (of Muḥammad) to some sort of Judeo-Christian sect.... The hypothesis being that at the beginning of the 7th century there existed, if not Arab translations of entire books of the Bible, at least anthologies in Arabic of quotes from the Bible or from other related Jewish or Christian apocalyptic texts."[34] It is true that the term "Judeo-Christian" is ambiguous if not vague. Historically speaking, non-trinitarian Judeo-Christian sects would have disappeared as such around the 4th and 5th centuries of the Common Era.[35] However, many of their doctrines seem to have survived in a "nebula", often going by the names of "Ebionites" or Nazareans/Nazoreans (the *naṣārā* of the Quran?) on the margins of the Byzantine empire in general and especially among Arabic speaking peoples, from Syria to Egypt and including Arabia and Yemen. A great many researchers, since the second half of the 19th century, have studied the question in fine detail.[36] Simon C. Mimouni even goes to the point of declaring:

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de l'islam", *Acta Orientalia Belgica* xx (2007), "Incroyance et dissidences religieuses. Jacques Ryckmans in memoriam", pp. 65-79. As has been said before, often the studies on the Jewish, Christian and Manichean influences are intertwined and therefore a great number of those that have been mentioned here and in the preceding footnotes deal with all those religious traditions or what connects them between each other.

34   A.-L. de Prémare, *Les fondations de l'islam*, pp. 267-269.

35   B. Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision: History and Archaeology of the Judaeo-Christians*, transl. E. Hoade, Jérusalem, 1971, pp. 143 sqq.; R.A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century*, Jerusalem-Leiden, 1988, *passim*; J.E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins*, Oxford, 1993, pp. 5-47.

36   By way of examples: Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Moḥammad*, vol. 1, pp. 21-45; H.-J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentum*, Tübingen, 1949, pp. 334 sqq.; H. Corbin, "Epiphanie divine et naissance spirituelle dans la gnose ismaélienne", *Eranos Jahrbuch* xxiii (1954-1955), reprint in id., *Temps cyclique et gnose ismaélienne*, Paris, 1982, partie 2; id., "De la gnose antique à la gnose ismaélienne", talk given at the Accademia Nazionale dei Linceiin 1956, included *Temps cyclique et gnose ismaélienne*, part 3; M.P. Roncaglia, "Eléments Ebionites et Elkasaïtes dans le Coran", *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 21 (1971), pp. 101-125; J. Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*, Oxford, 1977; Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*; J.M. Magnin, *Notes sur l'ébionisme*, Jérusalem, 1979; J.S. Trimingham, *Christianity Among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, London-New York, 1979, especially pp. 49, 68, 82 sqq., 153, 157, 166, 186; G. Rizzardi, *Il problema della cristologia coranica. Storia dell'ermeneutica cristiana*, Milan, 1980, pp. 115sqq.; S. Pines, "Notes on Islam and on Arabic Christianity and Judaeo-Chrsitianity", *JSAI* 4 (1984), pp. 135-152; J. Van Reeth, "Le prophète musulman en tant que Nâṣir allâh et ses antécédents: le 'Nazôraios' évangélique et le Livre des Jubilés", *Orientalia*

"Ebionite and Elkasaite groups (Aramaic speaking) persisted long after the birth of Islam – at least until the 8th century. One of them, the Ebionites, was probably absorbed into the new religion and influenced it to such a point that we should perhaps wonder if it has not to some extent participated in its birth."[37] The transmission, including a textual one, was probably made mainly through various East-Syrian and Mesopotamian dyophysicist Christian and/or West-Syrian, Egyptian and Ethiopian miaphysicist currents.[38] I have spoken of the "nebula" because, as Daniel Boyarin has pertinently underlined, the term "Judeo-Christian" can designate a non-sectarian group of spiritual movements, very often of the messianic type, sharing a certain number of dogmas and practices with Judaism and Christianity.[39] In the case of the environment of the birth of Muḥammad and of the Quran, to the aforementioned dogmas and practices, the doctrines of certain Jewish Christians sects have been added, in

Lovaniensia Periodica 23 (1992), pp. 251-274; Hawting, _The Idea of Idolatry_; S.C. Mimouni, "Les Nazoréens. Recherche étymologique et historique", _Revue Biblique_ 105 (1998), pp. 232-244; F. de Blois, "_Naṣrānī_ (Ναζωραίος) and _Ḥanīf_ (ἐθνικός): Studies on the Religious Vocabulary of Christianity and Islam", _BSOAS_ 65 (2002), pp. 1-30; (see however: S. Griffith, "_Al-Naṣārā_ in the Qurʾān: a Hermeneutical Reflection", in G.S. Reynolds (dir.), _The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context_, vol. 2: _New Perspectives on the Qurʾān_, 2011, London, pp. 301-322); Ch. & F. Jullien, "Aux frontières de l'iranité: '_Naṣrāyē_' et '_Krystyonē_' des inscriptions du _Mobad_ Kirdīr: enquête littéraire et historique", _Numen_ 49 (2002), pp. 282-335; Y.D. Nevo and J. Koren, _Crossroads to Islam: the Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State_, Amherst, 2003; E.-M. Gallez, _Le messie et son prophète_; J. Gnilka, _Die Nazarener und der Koran: Eine Spurensuche_, Freiburg, 2007; C. Segovia, "Thematic and Structural Affinities Between 1 Enoch and the Qurʾān"; P. Crone, "Jewish Christianity and the Qurʾān (Part One)", _JNES_ 74.2 (2015), pp. 225-253; for a bibliographical overview see now G.G. Stroumsa, "Jewish Christianity and Islamic Origins," in B. Sadeghi, A.Q. Ahmed, A. Silverstein and R.G. Hoyland (eds.), _Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts: Essays in Honour of Patricia Crone_, Leiden, 2015, pp. 72-96.

37   S.-C. Mimouni, _Le judéo-christianisme ancien. Essais historiques_, Paris, 1998, p. 22. See now H.M. Zellentin, _The Qurʾān's Legal Culture. The Didascalia Apostolorum as A Point of Departure_, Tübingen, 2013; M. Shaddel, "Quranic _Ummī_: Genealogy, Ethnicity and the Foundation of A New Community", _JSAI_ 43 (2016), pp. 1-60, in particular pp. 21-31; D. Bernard, _Les disciples juifs de Jésus du 1er siècle à Mahomet. Recherches sur le mouvement ébionite_, Paris, 2017.

38   R. Duval, _La littérature syriaque_, Paris, 1907 (3rd ed.), pp. 79-86; S. Pines, "The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source", _PIASH_ 2.13 (1966), pp. 1-73; many articles in J.C. van der Kam and W. Adler (eds.), _The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity_, Minneapolis, 1996; A.-L. de Prémare, _Les fondations de l'islam_, pp. 324 sqq.; id., _Aux origines du Coran. Questions d'hier, approches d'aujourd'hui_, Paris, 2004, _passim_.

39   D. Boyarin, (ed.), _Judaeo-Christianity Redivivus_, special issue of _The Journal of Early Christian Studies_ 9.4 (2001): 417-509; id., _Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity_, Philadelphia, 2004.

particular that of their refusal to accept that Jesus is the Son of God.[40] Be that as it may, many of the doctrines and religious practices which Christian theologians and heresiographs such Irenaeus in his *Contra Haereses*, Origen in his *Contra Celsum¸* Epiphanus in his *Panarion* or even Augustine, for example, in his *Letter on Heresies to Quodvultdeus*, attribute to the Ebionites and Nazareans (those who call themselves Christians yet wish to live according to Jewish law), form an essential part of the message of Muḥammad: a strict monotheism which refuses the divinity of Jesus but yet considers him to be the Christ and the Messiah (both synonymous words are expressed as *masīḥ* in Arabic, literally "anointed"; I shall come back to it), belief in the imminence of the end of the world and the coming of Judgement Day, regular prayer, fasting, alms and the practice of charity, the crucial role of ritual purity, the practice of circumcision and the prohibition of the consumption of pork and wine.[41] That is why Crone and Cook, referring to the Chronicles attributed to the Armenian priest Sebêos, a contemporary of Muḥammad, consider that, apart from wine, the Prophet forbids nothing that is not forbidden in the Bible.[42] So what of the coming of the Messiah?

3   The Coming of the Saviour

We are dealing here with a type of syllogism: Muḥammad announces the end of the world; he belongs to a biblical culture; he therefore has to announce the coming of the eschatological Saviour. Indeed, if Muḥammad and his message were derived from a monotheism of "Judeo-Christian sensibility" (the expression is Guillaume Dye's[43]) and they were intended for an audience that

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40   Segovia, "Thematic and Structural Affinities", pp. 232-233.

41   E.-M. Gallez shows in a convincing way that this abstention from wine is intimately linked to the Messianic expectation. (*Le messie et son prophète*, vol. 1, pp. 262sqq.).

42   P. Crone, M. Cook, *Hagarism*, pp. 6-7 et p. 157, footnote 36. This has also led Fred Donner (who nevertheless rejects the "Judeo-Christian" hypothesis) and more recently Stephen Shoemaker to consider that the very first followers of Muḥammad called "the Believers" (*muʾminūn*) were composed of Jewish and Christian monotheists and of "Muslims", *muslim*, that is, new converts "submitting" to the movement of Muḥammad. Things will change with the policy of Arabization of Islam by the Umayyads; see F. Donner, "From Believers to Muslims: Confessional Self-Identity in the Early Islamic Community", *al-Abḥāth* 50-51 (2002), pp. 9-53; id., *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, Cambridge, Mass., 2010; S. Shoemaker, *The Death of A Prophet*, *passim* and particularly chapter 4 ("From Believers to Muslims, from Jerusalem to the Ḥijāz: Confessional Identity and Sacred Geography in Early Islam") and the conclusion.

43   G. Dye, "Jewish Christianity, the Qurʾān, and Early Islam: some methodological caveats", in F. del Rio Sanchez (ed.), *Jewish Christianity and the Origins of Islam*, Turnhout, 2018, pp. 11-29.

belonged to the same sort of environment, and if they announced the imminent end of the world – all this being largely attested in the Quran and the Hadith, as we have just seen – then the Prophet could not have not spoken of that central figure of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic and messianic beliefs, the Messiah (*al-masīḥ* from the Hebrew *mashiaḥ* "anointed"). Why the negative formulation of the last sentence? For, oddly enough, and contrary to the Hadith, to which I will return, the Quran says nothing about any announcement that Muḥammad would have made of the imminent coming of the Messiah.[44] However, the non-Islamic works that are contemporary with the Arab prophet do mention it. For example, in the *Doctrina Jacobi*, also known as *Didascaly of Jacob*, a Christian work written in Greek probably shortly before 640, a certain Abraham, a Jew of Caesarea, addresses his brother Justus as follows "… a prophet has appeared with the Saracens (i.e. the Arabs), proclaiming the coming of the awaited Christ, the Messiah. Once in Sykamine, I went to an old man versed in the Scriptures and asked him: 'What can you tell me concerning the prophet who appeared among the Saracens? He replied sighing: "He is a false one! Prophets do not come with a sabre and a war chariot …"[45]

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44   According to Paul Casanova (*Mohammed et la fin du monde*, chap. VI, pp. 54-67 and chapter VII, pp. 68-69), it is impossible that the Quran, an apocalyptic book in its most ancient layers and an extension of the holy books of the Judeo-Christian tradition, would have said nothing about the Messiah as the saviour of end times. The astounding absence of any such mentions in the Quran would have been due to the later deletion of numerous passages by the caliphal authorities, given that the messianic dimension of the Quran would have given it a much too Shi'i flavour. David Cook thinks that the problem goes even beyond Shi'ism and concerns all of the early followers of Muhammad. Once the empire was constituted and the Islamic state was established, the caliphal authorities did everything possible to erase the Messianic origins of their religion and removed from the Quran anything that reflected those origins in too obvious a fashion, including the mention of the imminent coming of the Messiah (*Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, pp. 302 sqq.) These assertions reflect the ancient Shi'i doctrine of *taḥrīf*, that is the suppression of large passages of the Quran by the opponents of the Alids (see E. Kohlberg and M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and falsification. The Kitāb al-qirāāt of Aḥmad b. Muhammad al-Sayyārī*, Leiden, 2009, introduction; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *le Coran silencieux et le Coran parlant. Sources scripturaires de l'islam entre histoire et ferveur*, Paris, 2011, *passim* and especially chapter 2). Strangely enough, the figure of the Messiah is remarkable for its absence in the studies of D. Donner and of S. Shoemaker.

45   *Doctrina Jacobi* in *Patrologia Orientalis*, 1903, vol. 8, pp. 715 sqq., v.16; also ed. by G. Dagron et V. Déroche, *Doctrina Jacobi nuper Baptizati* in "Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Orient du VIIᵉ siècle", *Travaux et mémoires* 2 (1991), pp. 47-219 (citation, p. 209); see also P. Crone, M. Cook, *Hagarism*, pp. 4-6 (for whom ʿUmar is that Messiah); R.G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, pp. 55 sqq. et 400-409; Gallez, *Le Messie et son prophète*, vol. 2, pp. 109sqq. (citation, p. 110); S. Shoemaker, *The Death of A Prophet*, pp. 20 sqq. (citation, p. 22). On the dating problems of this source see also S.W. Anthony, "Muhammad, the Keys to Paradise

Similarly, in the Jewish work already mentioned, "The Secrets of Rabbi Shimʿôn ben Yohai", reference is made to an 'Apocalypse' of the beginning of the seventh century where it is said that, for certain Jews, Muḥammad was considered as a liberator of Jerusalem and an announcer of the Messiah.[46] Towards the end of the 7th century, the Syriac chronicler Jean Bar Penkaye wrote in the *Rīshmellē*: "… (the Omayyad) had received, as I told you, from (Muḥammad) who had been their *mhadyōnō*, an order favouring the Christian people and the order of monks …"[47] The term *mhadyōnō* has given the specialists of Syriac a few worries. Absent from the Costaz Dictionary, it is rendered as "guided" in Payne-Smith's. Alphonse Mingana has translated it as "leader" but the translation of Sebastian Brock as "guide", even "spiritual guide", seems more pertinent. What matters for

and the *Doctrina Iacobi*: A Late Antique Puzzle", *Der Islam* 91.2 (2014), pp. 243-265. In his *Chronography* of the year 622, Theophanes also highlights the fact that certain Jews considered Muḥammad to be one of their prophets; see F. Nau, "Un colloque du Patriarche Jean avec l'Emir des Agaréens et faits divers des années 712 à 716", *Journal Asiatique* 11.5 (1915), pp. 225-279, quote, p. 258. Fred Donner does not agree with the interpretation of the text which attributes the expectation of the Messiah to all followers of Muḥammad. According to him only a few Jews among them professed that belief (F. Donner, "La question du messianisme dans l'islam primitif", in M. Garcia-Arenal (ed), *Mahdisme et millénarisme en Islam*, n° spécial REMMM 91-94 (2000), pp. 17-27). It is true that Donner considers the first community of the followers of Muḥammad to have been interconfessional (see his work *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, Cambridge, Mass., 2010; see however the report by J. Tannous on *Expositions* 5.2 (2011), pp. 126-141) but, given the massive presence of all sorts of Jewish, Christian and Judeo-Christian material in the Quran and in the ancient Hadith, the distinction between people belonging to different religions among the followers of the Prophet seems more arduous. And what to make of the exclusivist passages of the Quran that are very far from any kind of ecumenism? Do they appear after Muḥammad?

46 Text edited by A. Jellinek in *Bet ha-midrash: Sammlung kleiner Midraschim und vermischter Abhandlungen aus der ältern jüdischen Literatur*, 6 vols., Leipzig, 1853-1877, vol. 3, pp. 78-82, citation, p. 78. English translation of the entire text by J.C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic*, pp. 76-89, quote, p. 78. See also Lewis, "An Apocalyptic Vision of Islamic History", pp. 323-324; Crone-Cook, *Hagarism*, pp. 4-5; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, pp. 310-311; Gallez, *Le Messie et son prophète*, vol. 2, pp. 112 sqq.; Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet*, pp. 27-33 and 66.

47 Jean Bar Penkayē, *Rīsh mellē*, ed. and French trans. of Book XV by A. Mingana, in *Sources syriaques*, vol. 1, t. II, Leipzig, 1907-1908, "Bar Penkayē", pp. 143-172 (Syriac text), pp. 172-204 (translation), quote, respectively pp. 146 et 175. English translation of chapters XIV et XV by S. Brock, "North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century: Book XV of John Bar Penkaye's *Riš Melle*", in *Studies in Syriac Chrsitianity: History, Literature, Theology*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1992, pp. 51-75, quote, p. 71. See also B. Flusin, "L'esplanade du Temple à l'arrivée des Arabes, d'après deux récits byzantins", in J. Raby and J. Johns (eds.), *Bayt Al-Maqdis: ʿAbd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, Oxford, 1992, pp. 21sq. (translation and analysis of a narrative dating from the conquest of Jerusalem in 638 and conserved in Georgian). I will return to the pro-Christian policy of the first Umayyads, in particular Muʿāwiya.

our present purpose is Brock's remark that the term "*mhadyōnō*" (from the verb *hdī* "to steer, to guide", giving the noun *hadōyō/hadīyō* "leader, guide") does not have an obvious precedent, but that the term *hadōyō*, which is closely linked to it, is a Christological title from the Syriac literature of the first times.[48] By linking this meaning with the texts of the *Doctrina Jacobi* and the "Secrets of Rabbi Shim'ôn ben Yohai", one can reasonably postulate that the title could have meant "he who announces the coming of Christ".

Indeed, much textual evidence shows that, for the first followers of Muḥammad and probably for himself, the Messiah of the end times was none other than Jesus Christ.[49] In the first place, the Quran states this very clearly on many occasions (verses 3:45; 4:157, 171 and 172; 5:17, 72 and 75; 9:30-31). Of those occasions, four use the expression "the Messiah Jesus" (*al-masīḥ ʿĪsā*). The passage at 43:57-61, although admittedly obscure, even seems to mean that Jesus is a sign of the coming of the 'Hour' that Muḥammad's people had rejected: "And when the son of Mary is cited as an example, behold, thy people turn away from it (...) He is a sign of the Hour; doubt not concerning it, and follow me. This is a straight way."[50] In his letter to John the Stylite, James of Edessa (d. 708) writes: "the *Mahgraye* (most probably an Aramaic transliteration of *muhājirūn*, a name, along with the *muʾminūn*, that designated the first followers of Muḥammad) ... all confess firmly that Jesus is the true Messiah that was supposed to come and that had been predicted by the prophets; on this point there is no dispute with us (Christians)."[51] Many studies on followers of the

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48   S. Brock, "Syriac Views of Emergent Islam", p. 14; quoted by A. Genet, "Le premier siècle de l'islam vu par les chroniqueurs syriaques", M.A. Thesis of the EPHE, June 2015, pp. 88-89 and also pp. 96-97.

49   On this question see the monographs by M. Hayek, *Christ de l'Islam*, Paris, 1959; G. Parrinder, *Jesus in the Quran*, London, 1965; G.C. Anawati, "'Īsā", *EI2*, vol. 4, pp. 82-87. For other studies about Jesus in Islam see the introduction by G. Dye and F. Nobilio to *Figures bibliques en islam*, note 52, *in fine*, p. 28 and in the same volume J. van Reeth, "La typologie du prophète selon le Coran: le cas de Jésus", pp. 81-105.

50   "He is a sign of the Hour": *innahᵘ la-ʿalamᵘⁿ li-l-sāʿa* (according to the translation of Blachère), canonical variation (reading known as Warsh ʿan Nāfiʿ) that seems preferable to me to that of the Vulgata (reading known as Hafṣʿan ʿĀṣim): *innahᵘ la-ʿilmᵘⁿ li-l-sāʿa* ("He is knowledge of the Hour", according to the translation of Berque); on this question see Parrinder, *Jesus in the Quran*, p. 34; Anawati, "'Īsā", p. 84.

51   Quoted by F. Nau, "Lettre de Jacques d'Edesse sur la généalogie de la sainte Vierge", *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 4 (1901), pp. 512-531, citation, pp. 518-519 (Syriac text), p. 524 (French translation). The text of James of Edessa dates from the last third of the 7th century; does it reflect the data of the first third? Moerover, one should remember that, as seen above, the Biblism of the Quran is of the "Judeo-Christian" type: the simultaneous acceptance of a certain number of Jewish beliefs and practices and of Jesus as the Christ and Messiah, Word and Spirit of God.

Prophet during the early years of Islam were concerned with the identification of the Messiah, as the saviour of the end times, with Jesus Christ.[52]

Thus is most likely the reason why Muḥammad would not have presented himself as the Messiah.[53] On the other hand, he would have been considered, at least by some of his followers, as the Paraclete. The most renowned textual confirmation is the famous passage of Ibn Isḥāq/Ibn Hishām in *al-Sīrat al-nabawiyya*, which echoes verses 14:16 and 15:23-26 of the Gospel of John: "… 'And when the *munḥamannā* shall come, the one God shall send us on behalf of the Lord, as well as the Spirit of holiness (*rūḥ al-quds*), He who issues from his Lord's house. He shall be a witness for me, as well as you because you are with me since the ancient times. I tell you so that you may not doubt'. The *munḥamannā* in Syriac is *muḥammad* (in Arabic) and the Paraclete in Greek (*al-baraqlīṭus*) (*al-munḥamannā bi l-siryāniyya muḥammad wa huwa bi l-rūmiyya al-baraqlīṭus*)."[54] The Syriac term *menaḥḥemānā* (from the Hebrew root *nḥm*, meaning "consoler, advocate, intercessor"), indeed translates as *paraklētos* in Greek. The Arabic text obviously plays on the vague assonance

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52 Apart from the works mentioned in footnote 48, one will find very useful indications in H. Michaud, *Jésus selon le Coran*, Neuchatel, 1960; W. Madelung, "Kāʾim Āl Muhammad", *EI2*, vol. 4, pp. 456-457; id. "al-Mahdī", *ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 1230-1238; id., "ʿAbdallāh b. al-Zubayr and the Mahdi", *JNES* 40 (1981), pp. 291-305; id., "The Sufyānī between Tradition and History", *SI* 63 (1984), pp. 1-48; G.S. Reynolds, "Jesus, the *Qāʾim* and the End of the World", *RSO* 75 (2001), pp. 55-86. See also G. van Vloten, *Recherches sur la domination arabe, le chiitisme et les croyances messianiques sous le khalifat des Omayades*, Amsterdam, 1894, *passim*; E. Moeller, *Beiträge zur Mahdilehre des Islams*, Heidelberg, 1901, *passim*; S.M. Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ: An Essay on the Life, Character and Teachings of Jesus Christ According to the Koran and Orthodox Tradition*, Edinburgh-New York, 1912; J.O. Blichfeldt, *Early Mahdism: Politics and Religion in the Formative Period of Islam*, Leiden, 1985, index *s.n.* Jesus.

53 The hypotheses of Carlos Segovia on Muḥammad as the new Messiah, in the postface of his recent work on the Quranic Noah, seem to my eyes to be speculative, given the present state of our knowledge (C. Segovia, *The Quranic Noah and the Making of the Islamic Prophet*, Berlin-Boston, 2015, "Afterword", pp. 114-117). They are based mostly on the sources used by Uri Rubin in his article on the mystical figure of Muḥammad (Rubin, "Pre-existence and Light: Aspects of the Concept of Nūr Muḥammad", *IOS* 5 (1975), pp. 62-119). It is true that certain aspects of that figure recall the descriptions of the Messiah given in 1 Hénoch, 48:2 sqq. and 62:7. But that possible remote root seems to me to be a less pertinent origin for the works examined by Rubin, mainly dating from the 4th et 5th Hijri centuries, than the Shiʿi sources of the 2nd and 3rd centuries on the figures of the Prophet and mostly ʿAlī (I shall come back to it).

54 Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrat al-nabawiyya*, ed. Saqqā, Abyārī, Shalabī, Cairo, 2nd ed., 1955, vol. 1, pp. 232-233; also ed., F. Wüstenfeld, *Das Leben Moḥammeds nach Muhammad b. Isḥāq*, 2 vols., Göttingen, 1858-1860, vol. 1, p. 149; A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad. A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, Oxford, 1955, p. 104.

between *munḥamannā* and *muḥammad* in order to prove the announcement of the Arab prophet by the Christian evangelist. However, the first term means, as we have just seen, "consoler" and the second one "the most praised". The semantic equivalence that the *Sīra* establishes between both terms could be derived from a confusion between the Greek words *paraklētos* ("advocate", "defender", "intercessor") and *pēriklutos* ("someone renowned, praised"), due to their transcription into a Semitic language without vowel annotations (*brqlts*). One must however note that the evangelist's term is rendered by *prqlṭ'/paraqlīṭā* in the Syriac version of the New Testament, the Peshīṭṭā.[55] The name *Aḥmad* of the Quran verse 61:6 (another name of Muḥammad according to the tradition also meaning "the most praised") seems to have the same purpose, as indeed are traditions such as: "God revealed himself to Jacob and declared: 'Among your descendants, I shall send kings and prophets until the Prophet of the sanctuary (*nabī al-ḥaram*), he who shall rebuild the Temple (*haykal*) of Jerusalem. He is the Seal of prophets and his name is Aḥmad, that is Muḥammad.'"[56]

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[55]   On these questions see T. Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, Leipzig, 1909[2], vol. 1, pp. 9-10; A. Baumstark, "Eine altarabische Evangelienübersetzung aus dem Christlich-Palästinensischen", *Zeitschrift für Semitistik und verwandte Gebiete* 8 (1932), pp. 201-209, in particular p. 205; A.E. Bishop Guthrie, "The Praclete, Almunhamanna and Aḥmad", *The Muslim World* 41.4 (1951), pp. 251-256; A.-L. de Prémare, "'Comme il est écrit', l'histoire d'un texte", *SI* 70 (1989), pp. 27-56, in particular p. 45; id., "Prophétisme et adultère, d'un texte à l'autre", *REMMM* 58 (1990/4), pp. 101-135, especially pp. 124 sqq.; M.-T. Urvoy, "Annonce de Mahomet" in M.A. Amir-Moezzi (éd.), *Dictionnaire du Coran*, Paris, 2007, pp. 55-56; Gallez, *Le messie et son prophète*, pp. 335 sqq.; J. Van Reeth, "Who is the 'Other' Paraclete?" in C. Segovia and B. Lourié (eds.), *The Coming of the Comforter: When, Where and to Whom?*, pp. 423-452; S. Anthony, "Muḥammad, Menaḥem and the Paraclete: New Lights on Ibn Isḥāq (d. 150/767) Arabic Version of John 15:23-16/1", *BSOAS* 79/2 (2016), pp. 255-278.

[56]   Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, ed. Sachau, *Biographien Muhammeds, seiner Gefhärten und der späteren Träger des Islams, bis zum jahre 230 der Flucht*, Leiden, 9 vols., 1904-1928, vol. 1.1, p. 107; see also O. Livne-Kafri, "Jerusalem in Early Islam: The Escathological Aspect", *Arabica* 53 (2006), pp. 382-403 (quote and analysis, pp. 385-386). The belief according to which the mention of the Prophet as the Paraclete was part of the text of the Gospel of John before its falsification by the Christians is deeply rooted in Islam. In his *Relation*, Samson, an Apostolic missionary sent by Louis XIV to Persia, writes: "[the Muslims] says that … in chapter 14 of Saint John … the Christians have erased the name of Mahomet whom they claim to be the Paraclete promised by Jesus-Christ" (Samson, *Relation de l'état présent du royaume de Perse*, Paris, 1695, p. 203). Apart from the constant mentions of the subject in the classical literature of anti-Christian controversies, an entire late literary genre is consecrated, especially among the Shiʿis: see for example Muhammad ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib al-Zāhidī al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1181/1767-1768), *Bishārat al-nubuwwa*, Sayyid ʿAlī b. Abī l-Qāsim al-Qummī al-Lāhūrī (d. 1288/1871-1872), *Bishārat-i aḥmadiyya* and also Muḥammad Ṣādiq Fakhr al-Islām (d. after 1330/1911), *Fāraqlīṭā* (quoted by Āghā Bozorg al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*

It should be noted that the name Muḥammad (as well as the very close Aḥmad) is problematic. It seems indeed to be a sort of "onomastic hapax". In his monographic article dedicated to the subject, Mohammed Hocine Benkheira speaks of an "innovation", of a "laudatory nickname", even possibly "a title linked to the messianic status of the Prophet".[57] It appears that prosopographers, from Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845), (incidentally contradicted by Ibn Qutayba – d. 276/889) to the much later Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), by citing the names to other Muḥammads, either earlier than or contemporary with the Prophet, may have attempted to deny the uniqueness of his name, and so consign the messianic nature of his mission to oblivion.[58] The question had already been asked by Hartwig Hirschfeld, for whom the Quranic mentions of Muḥammad are later additions with the same goal in mind.[59] Other scholars, from Aloys Sprenger to Gabriel S. Reynolds, have also studied this problem from different angles.[60] On the other hand, the different spellings of the name by Syriac authors – *mḥmṭ* for almost all the syro-occidental authors and *mḥmd* for the syro-oriental ones, could indicate – although it cannot prove – that it was unusual or even unknown in the region.[61] Is this because it is an Arabised form

ilā taṣānīf al-shīʿa, 25 vols., Tehran-Najaf, 1353-1398/1934-1978, respectively vol. 3, pp. 112 and 118 and vol. 16, p. 95).

57   M.H. Benkheira, "Onomastique et religion: à propos d'une réforme du nom propre au cours des premiers siècles de l'islam", in C. Müller and M. Roiland-Rouabah (eds.), *Les non-dits du nom. Onomastique et documents en terre d'Islam. Mélanges offerts à Jacqueline Sublet*, Damascus-Beirut, 2013, pp. 319-356 (citations, pp. 329-330). According to the author, ʿUmar, ʿAlī or Jaʿfar are not proper names *stricto sensu* either.

58   *Ibid.* pp. 330 sqq. and p. 326.

59   H. Hirschfeld, *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran*, London, 1902, pp. 138-140. Theses adopted and developed, not always in the most convincing of ways, by V. Popp, "The Early History of Islam, Following Inscriptional and Numismatic Testimony", in K.-H. Ohlig and G.-R. Puin (eds.), *The Hidden origins of Islam: New Research into Its Early History*, New York, 2010, pp. 17-124 and by C. Luxenberg, "A New Interpretation of the Arabic Inscriptions in Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock", in *ibid.*, pp. 125-151.

60   See for example ex. A. Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Moḥammad*, vol. 1, pp. 155-161; T. Andrae, *Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde*, Uppsala, 1917, pp. 272-276; U. Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad As Viewed by the Early Muslims*, London, 1995, pp. 39-43; J.-L. Déclais, "Names of the Prophet" in J.D. Mc Auliffe (ed.), *EQ*, vol. 3 (2003), pp. 501-505; H. Djaït, *La vie de Muhammad*, Paris, 2007, pp. 236-240; Gallez, *le messie et son prophète*, pp. 32 sqq. (p. 332 sq. the hypothesis according to which the name Muḥammad comes from the surname *īsh ḥamudōt* of the prophet Daniel is seductive but too speculative because it is philologically too fragile); C. Gilliot, "Nochmals: Hieβ der Prophet Muḥammad?" in M. Gross & K.-H. Ohlig (eds.), *Die Entstehung einer Weltreligion II. Von der koranischen Bewegung zum Frühislam*, Berlin, 2011, pp. 53-95; G.S. Reynolds, "Remembering Muḥammad", *Numen* 58 (2011), pp. 188-206.

61   A. Genet, "Le premier siècle de l'islam vu par les chroniqueurs syriaques", p. 87.

of the name which, in other languages, means Paraclet, like the Syriac word *munḥamannā* as which we have just seen or, as Geo Widengren has pertinently suggested, the Iranian term *Manūḥmēd/Manvahmēd*, a Manichean variation of the Avestic *VohuManah/Vahman/Bahman*?[62]

What does "Paraclet" mean? We cannot be sure, since the definitions, the interpretations and the concepts with which it is associated in the writings of John the Evangelist – its only appearances in the New Testament – and, as one would expect, in Christian literature in general, are so many and varied.[63] A consultation of the articles devoted to the word in such standard reference books as the *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Dogmatique*, the *Dictionnaire du Catholicisme*, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, the *Encyclopédie Théologique de Migne* or even the *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique de la Bible*, as well as in the countless articles or books published about it from end of the 19th century to the present times, will confirm this. In his article "Who is the 'Other' Paraclete?", Jan Van Reeth provides a succinct, well documented synthesis of the different meanings of the term: "the one who comforts, the consoler", "intercessor, advocate", "assistant, help", "resurrector, reviver", "herald, announcer".[64] Often identified with the Holy Spirit, with Jesus Christ himself or his spiritual essence, the Paraclete, in its different functions, is a power, a spirit, angelic or divine being who 'comes down' to the saint, identifies with him and makes of him a prophet, a messenger from Above.[65] Among these different meanings, the last is most relevant here. It would seem to derive from a Mandean and more especially gnostic perception of the Paraclete expressed by the Syriac term *parwānqīn* – probably confused with "paraclete" in its adjectival form *pūrqānāyā* – which appears in the famous text called *The Hymn of the Pearl*: "I left the East (and) I went down, and the two guides (*parwānqīn*) were with me. For the way was terrible and difficult and I, to go that way, I was (but)

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62   G. Widengren, *The Great Vohu Manah and the Apostle of God: Studies in Iranian and Manichean Religion*, Uppsala, 1945, *passim*; id., *Die Religionen Irans*, Stuttgart, 1965, pp. 12 et 79 sqq. and p. 306. On the parallelism of *Manūḥmēd/Manvahmēd* with the Paraclete, see for example H.Ch. Puech, "Le manichéisme" in *Histoire des religions, Encyclopédie la Pléiade* 11, Paris, 1972, pp. 523-645, in particular pp. 555 sq.; M. Tardieu, *Le manichéisme*, Paris, 1981, pp. 20-21; R. Simon, "Mānī and Muhammad", p. 134; M. Sfar, *Le Coran, la Bible et l'Orient ancien*, pp. 413-414; F. De Blois, "Elchasai-Manes-Muhammad. Manichäismus und Islam in religionhistorischem Vergleich", *Der Islam* 81 (2004), pp. 31-48, especially pp. 45-46.

63   John 14: 16, 25-26; 15:26 and 16:7. As a gloss one may also add: Revelation 2:1, 7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 14:13.

64   J. Van Reeth, "Who is the 'Other' Paraclete?", respectively pp. 423 sq.; 427 sq.; 430 sq.; 433-434; 434-435.

65   *Ibid.*, pp. 448-450.

a child".[66] The word is of Iranian origin and does in fact mean "guide". It applies more exactly, especially in Parthian, to the herald who announces the coming of the king and guides the people by announcing the king's commands. In Manichean salvation theory, the term means a spiritual being who guides the souls of the faithful toward the Good.[67] This meaning echoes two texts of John. The first, 14: 25-26 has generally been understood to refer to the Paraclete-Holy Spirit announcing the Second Coming: "25 These things I have spoken to you, abiding with you; 26 But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you".

Then, John 15:26, where the Paraclete is said to witness the coming of the Messiah: "When the Paraclete will come, whom I will send to you on behalf of the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify on my behalf".[68] Thus, in the "Judeo-Christian" messianic context, the title of "Paraclete" attributed to Muḥammad would have meant the announcer of the Parousia, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.[69] But, according to a significant

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66 See P.-H. Poirier, *L'Hymne de la Perle des Actes de Thomas. Introduction, texte, commentaire*, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1981, verses 16 et 17; I am quoting the translation of the Syriac version, p. 344; translation of the Greek version, p. 358 and that of the paraphrase of Nicetas of Thessaloniki, p. 372. Everywhere *parwānqīn* is rendered by "two guides".

67 Van Reeth, *ibid.*, pp. 435-436; also G. Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans*, pp. 296 sq.

68 The function of "witness" of the Paraclete, derived most probably from a synoptic tradition (see Matthew 10:19-20 = Marc 13:11-12 = Luke 21:16) seems to be a striking parallel with the Quranic verses 48:8-9 if, following Denise Masson and Edouard-Marie Gallez, one identifies "the messenger" (*rasūl*) of verse 9 with Jesus Christ (especially by putting this verse in parallel with 4:171: "The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was the Messenger of God, and His Word that He committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him"): "Surely We have sent thee [Muḥammad] as a witness, good tidings to bear, and warning (*shāhidan wa mubashshiran wa nadhīran*) / that you may believe in God and His Messenger …" (D. Masson, *Le Coran*, vol. 1, commentary of verse 4:136 and 171 and vol. 2, commentary of verse 48:9; E.–M. Gallez, *Le Messie et son prophète*, vol. 2, pp. 355-356). Indeed, the second person singular of verse 8, clearly distinguished from the "messenger" of verse 9, has been a problem for the commentators who wished to identify both with Muḥammad. On the question of an intentional confusion between grammatical persons (*iltifāt*) in the Quran see A.-L. de Prémare, *Aux origines du Coran*, pp. 106-107.

69 As was the case for Mani; see H.-C. Puech, "Le manichéisme", *Histoire des religions*, vol. 2, pp. 550 sqq.; J. Ries, "Elchasaïsme" in *Dictionnaire des religions*, Paris, 1984, p. 512. On the importance of the Christian notion of the Second Coming of Christ, the Double Visit or the Second Christ, its Jewish and intertestamentary roots as well as its extensions during the first times of Islam see respectively P.J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, Berkeley, 1985, pp. 151-184; M. Philonenko, *Les interpolations chrétiennes des douze Patriarches et les manuscrits de Qoumrân*, Paris, 1960, *passim* and especially pp. 10 sqq., 31 sqq., 43 sqq.; *Ecrits intertestamentaires*, under the direction of A. Dupont-Sommer and M. Philonenko, Paris, 1987, index *s.v.* et l'introduction de P. Geoltrain, pp. 31sq.; W. Sundermann, "Der Paraklet in ostmanichäischen Überlieferung" in P. Bryder (ed.),

number of texts, for some of his followers, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) was the locus of manifestation of Jesus and thus the second Messiah.

4   Jesus and ʿAlī

"Addressing ʿAlī the Prophet declared: Something about you resembles Jesus the son of Mary (*fīka shibh min ʿĪsā b. Maryam*) and if I did not fear that certain groups of my Community would say of you what the Christians have said of Jesus I would reveal something about you that would have made the people gather up the dust in your footsteps, to seek blessings from it".[70] This tradition, which stresses the theological similarity between Jesus and ʿAlī, is recorded by Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī (d. 328 or 329/939-40 or 940-941), one of the most respected authorities on the so-called "moderate" Twelver Shiʿi hadith. But the identification of the two figures with each other culminates in sources from a number of esoteric Shiʿi circles, which were later accused by their adversaries of "bāṭinism" (belief in the supremacy of the esoteric dimension of the faith over its exoteric dimensions) and of "extremism" (*ghuluww*).[71] These circles had their roots deep in the origins of Islam, in the circles of Imams Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. circa 119/737) and Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), at the end of the first and the beginning of second Hijri centuries,[72] or perhaps even

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Manichean Studies. Proceeding of the First International Conference on Manichaeism, Lund, 1988, pp. 201-212; F. Donner, "The Sources of Islamic Conceptions of War", in J. Kelsay and J. Turner Johnson (eds.), *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theological Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions*, New York, 1991, pp. 31-69, especially pp. 43 sqq.; id., *Muhammad and the Believers*, pp. 16, 96-97, 125.

70   Al-Kulaynī, *al-Rawḍa min al-Kāfī*, ed. H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī, Tehran, 1389/1969, vol. 1, p. 81, n° 18.

71   On the rather late and ideological character of the distinction between "moderate" and "extremist" Shiʿism, especially during the ancient period, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin dans le Shiʿisme originel. Aux sources de l'ésotérisme en* islam, Paris-Lagrasse, 1992 (2005²), especially the conclusion; id., "Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine I: remarques sur la divinité de l'Imam", *Studia Iranica* 25.2 (1996), pp. 193-216 (= id., *La religion discrète. Croyances et pratiques spirituelles dans l'islam Shiʿite*, Paris, 2006, chapter 3 and here Ch. 4); id., "Les Imams et les Ghulāt".

72   See H. Halm, *Kosmologie und Heilslehre der frühe Ismāʿīlīya. Eine Studie zur islamischen Gnosis*, Wiesbaden, 1978; id., *Die islamische Gnosis. Die extreme Schia und die ʿAlawiten*, Zurich-Munich, 1982; J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, vol. 1, Berlin-New York, 1991, pp. 233-403 and especially 306 sqq.; id., *Der Eine und das Andere. Beobachtungen an islamischen häresiographischen Texten*, Berlin-New York, 2011, *passim*; Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin dans le Shiʿisme originel, passim.* M. Asatryan, *Controversies in Formative Shiʿi Islam, passim*; Tahmin Bayhoum-Daou's casting doubt on the "gnostic" character of early Shiʿism and her hypothesis about the late date of the gnostic Shiʿi doctrines is not

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earlier, in the entourage of ʿAlī himself, and hence possibly in the lifetime of Muḥammad.[73] That is why the somewhat later texts describing the traditions that interest us derive from very old texts, whose content is incidentally confirmed by heresiographical works on the first Shiʿi circles of the esoteric and gnostic type and on the great Alid "heresiarchs". What is more, the question we have already asked about the very probable authenticity of the apocalyptic content of the Quran and the Hadith, is also pertinent here: what interest would later Shiʿis have had in identifying ʿAlī with Jesus as the Saviour of the End of Time, when this End did not occur and ʿAlī was himself murdered? They would have thus discredited their champion! For all these reasons, the traditions that we are studying here are all very ancient, possibly dating back to the times of Muḥammad and of ʿAlī themselves, although only documented in later sources.

"People! I am the Christ (*anā l-masīḥ*)", says ʿAlī, "I who heal the blind and the leper, who create the birds and banish the clouds (an allusion to Quran 5:110) … I am the Christ and he is I … Jesus, son of Mary, is part of me and I am part of him (*huwa minnī wa anā minhu*). He is the greatest Word of God (*kalimat allāh al-kubrā*)".[74]

ʿAlī is not a reincarnation of Jesus. His identification with the Son of Mary is explained in ancient Shiʿism by the doctrine of the transmission of the sacred Legacy (*al-waṣiyya*), of the Light of Alliance or the Divine Friendship (*nūr al-walāya*), of the divine particle (*juzʾ ilāhī*) or of "metemphotosis" ("the movement of light", as I have translated the term *tanāsukh*).[75] It is the transmission, the inherence, of a luminous divine force in and between the members of a long chain of initiated saints, making of them inspired figures empowered to communicate with God and so convey messages from On High to mankind

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defensible, as it in fact goes against an enormous mass of textual data as well as against a great number of studies like the ones that have just been mentioned (see her article "The Second Century Shiʿite *ghulāt*: Were They Really Gnostic?", *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 5.2 (2003-4), pp. 13-61).

73   Gh.Ḥ. Ṣadīqī, *Jonbesh hā-ye dīnī-ye īrānī dar qarn hā-ye dovvom va sevvom-e hejrī* (completed and updated version of the author's thesis by himself: *Les mouvements religieux iraniens au IIᵉ et IIIᵉ siècles de l'hégire*, Paris, 1938), Tehran, 1372 solar/1993, pp. 225 sqq.; E. Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī Shīʿī Views on the *Ṣaḥāba*", *JSAI* 5 (1984), pp. 143-175, especially pp. 145-146 (= id., *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shīʿism*, Aldershot, 1991, article n° 9); M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Considérations sur l'expression *dīn ʿAlī*. Aux origines de la foi Shīʿite", *ZDMG* 150.1 (2000), pp. 29-68 (= id., *La religion discrète*, chapter 1) and here ch. 3.

74   *Kitāb al-kashf*, attributed to Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman (Ismaili author, d. first half 4th/10th c., maybe around 346/957), ed. R. Strothmann, London, 1952, p. 8.

75   U. Rubin, "Pre-existence and Light: Aspects of the Concept of Nūr Muḥammad"; Id., "Prophets and Progenitors in Early Shīʿa Tradition", *JSAI* 1 (1979), pp. 41-65; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Guide divin*, especially part II and index *s.v.*; Id., *La religion discrète*, in particular chapters 3 et 4 and index *s.v.*

and even, in certain cases, transforming them into the locus of manifestation of God (*maẓhar, majlā*); a doctrine that is in many respects reminiscent of the Paraclete discussed above.[76]

The messianic nature of ʿAlī as Saviour, resurrector and judge of the end times is clearly illustrated by many utterances of some sermons (*khuṭba*) attributed to him, in which an eternal Guide, speaking through the mouth of the historical ʿAlī, affirms loud and clear his theophanic reality:[77]

"'Alī: … I am the Retributor on the Day of Retribution [*dayyān yawm al-dīn*]. I am the Judge [*qasīm*] of the Garden and the Fire[78] … I am the first Noah. I am the instigator of the second Flood[79] … I am the Hour for the deniers. I am the Call that wakes the inhabitants of the graves. I am the Lord on the Day of Resurrection [*anā l-sāʿa li l-mukadhdhibīn/anā al-nidāʾ al-mukhrij man fī l-qubūr/anā ṣāḥib yawm al-nushūr*] … I am the One who shall fill the earth with justice and equity, as it was filled before with oppression and injustice [or darkness: *zulman* or *zuluman*]. I am the Concealed One, the Awaited One for the mighty Affair [*anā l-ghāʾib al-muntaẓar li l-amr al-ʿaẓīm*] … I am the Celebrant of the Resurrection [*anā qayyim al-qiyāma*]. I am the Celebrant of the Hour. I am the Creator. I am the Created One [*anā l-khāliq/anā l-makhlūq*] … I am the resurrector of the dead … I am he who spoke through the mouth of Jesus … I am the Saviour (literally "The Guided One") of this time [*anā mahdī l-awān*]. I am the Christ. I am the Second Christ. I am the Jesus of this age [*anā l-masīḥ/ anā l-masīḥ al-thānī/anā ʿĪsā l-zamān*]" (see also here chapter 4).

It is no doubt the reason why the docetic conception of the death of Jesus, reflected in Quranic verses 4:157-158, may have been applied to ʿAlī by his unconditional followers. According to the heresiographer ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī

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76   See M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Religion discrète*, index *s.v.* and also J. Van Reeth, "Melchisédech le Prophète éternel selon Jean d'Apamée et le monarchianisme musulman", *Oriens Christianus* 96 (2012), pp. 8-46, especially p. 17, 23 et 46; id., "Who is the 'Other' Paraclete?", pp. 428 et 445.

77   The most ancient evidence of that type of sermon comes from a Qarmati document from the 3rd/10th century, reproduced in a kaysānite proclamation dating from 278/890-891 and reported by al-Ṭabarī (m. 310/923) in his *History* (*Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa l-mulūk*, éd. Muhammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1960, vol. 10, pp. 25-26). They are also reported by Shiʿi texts, of all denominations, throughout Islamic history, right up to 19th century Iranian mystics and philosophers such as Jaʿfar al-Kashfī (d. 1267/1850-1851) or Abū l-Qāsim Rāz Shīrāzī (d. 1286/1869); see Amir-Moezzi, "Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine I: remarques sur la divinité de l'imam" (see here chap. 4). These sermons attributed to ʿAlī resemble the "I am" sayings of Jesus in the Gospels (e.g. John 10:30 and 14:11) which are the most representative of the way Jesus describes himself; see E. Stauffer, *Jesus. Gestalt und Geschichte*, Bern, 1957, pp. 130-145.

78   To be compared to Christ as the arbiter on Judgement Day in Matthew 25, 31 ss.

79   On the Messianic dimension of the figure of Noah and of the eschatological symbolism of the Flood, see now the careful examination by C. Segovia, *The Quranic Noah and the Making of the Islamic Prophet*.

(d. 429/1037): "When ʿAlī was assassinated, [his follower] ʿAbdallāh Ibn Sabaʾ affirmed that the person killed was not ʿAlī but a demon (*shayṭān*) which had appeared to the people in the shape of ʿAlī. As for the veritable ʿAlī, he had been elevated to heaven, just like Jesus, son of Mary. Ibn Sabaʾ also said: Just as the Jews and the Christians lie in affirming the execution of Jesus, so do the enemies (of ʿAlī and his family: *nawāṣib*) and the Kharijis lie in affirming the murder of ʿAlī. The Jews and the Christians have seen a person being crucified and it seemed to them that that person was Jesus (allusion to the above-mentioned verses from the Quran). Likewise those who pretend that ʿAlī has been killed have merely seen a corpse which they took to be him. But ʿAlī ascended into heaven. In the fulness of time he will return to earth and take revenge upon his enemies".[80]

Likewise al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (d. circa 300/912-913) another prominent heresiographer writes: "(After the assassination of ʿAlī, his followers were divided into three groups). The first affirmed that ʿAlī had not been killed and that he was not dead; that he cannot be killed and will not die before he leads the Arabs with his staff and fills the earth with justice and equity even as it now overflows with oppression and injustice … (Learning of the murder of ʿAlī by a messenger Ibn Sabaʾ told him): You lie! Even if you were to bring us ʿAlī's brain in seventy bags accompanied by seventy witnesses to his assassinations, we would remain convinced that he is not dead, that he cannot be killed, nor will he die, before returning to reign over the earth".[81] There is also the example of the heresiarch al-Ablaq, one of the leaders of the Shiʿi Rāwandiyya sect and an upholder of the *tanāsukh* doctrine, who preached that the spirit of Jesus was instilled in ʿAlī.[82]

Moreover in many Shiʿi traditions, ʿAlī is given the two "Judeo-Christian" messianic titles of *Fārūq* (from the Hebrew and Aramaic *pārūqa*, redeemer, saviour)[83] and of *Ṣiddīq* (after the Qumran Master of Justice *Ṣeddēq*).[84] We know that in Sunnism these titles are given respectively to ʿUmar and Abū Bakr, but the Alids have always considered that this was yet another usurpation of ʿAlī's

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80   Al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-firaq*, ed. M. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, Beirut, 1393/1973, pp. 223-224.

81   Al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-shīʿa*, ed., H. Ritter, Istanbul, 1931, pp. 19-20.

82   E. Kohlberg, "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭāleb", *EIr*, partie ii: "ʿAlī as seen by the community: among extremist Shiʿites", vol. 1, p. 845a.

83   E.g. J. Levy, *Neuhebräisches und chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim*, Leipzig, 1876-1889, *s.v. paroqa*; A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran*, Baroda, 1938, pp. 227-229. Also Prémare, *Fondations de l'islam*, p. 165 (reference of Zachariah 9,9 according to the Syriac version of the Bible).

84   A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, p. 195; see also C. Melchert, "The Interpretation of Three Quranic Terms (*Siyāḥa*, *Ḥikma* and *Ṣiddīq*) of Special Interest to the Early Renonciants", in S.R. Burge (ed.), *The Meaning of the Word. Lexicology and Quranic Exegesis*, London, 2015, pp. 89-116, in particular pp. 102-103. On the survival of beliefs going back to Qumran into Islam, see J. van Reeth, "Who is the 'Other' Paraclete?", pp. 428, 432, 434, 442.

rights.[85] One may even reasonably opine that, in such a context, the title *amīr al-muʾminīn*, exclusively reserved to ʿAlī in Shiʿism, and which even subsequent Imams are not entitled to assume, might have had a messianic and apocalyptic meaning: *amīr*, the officiant of the *amr*, the Hour, the End of Times, hence the Messiah, who is at the head of the *muʾminīn*, that is the "Judeo-Christian" followers of Muḥammad.[86]

Thus, if we consider that the ancient expression *walāyat ʿAlī*, the "divine alliance" (practically in the Biblical sense of the term) of ʿAlī may also have had the meaning of "theophanic nature and messianic mission of ʿAlī", this would cast a different light on a great number of traditions describing the prophetic mission of Muḥammad and the apocalyptic and messianic role of ʿAlī:

> "For Muḥammad, ʿAlī is a miraculous sign of God (*āya*, which also applies to the verses of the Quran dictated by God). The Prophet did but call the people to the *walāya* of ʿAlī."[87]
>
> "The angel Gabriel came to me", the Prophet is reputed to have said, "and told me: 'Muḥammad! Your lord orders you the love (*ḥubb*) of ʿAlī and the proclamation of his *walāya.*'"[88]

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85   See for example *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī*, ed. M.B. al-Anṣārī al-Zanjānī al-Khuʾīnī, 3 vols., Qum, 1426/1995, tradition n° 26, vol. 2, pp. 780-781; al-Ṭabrisī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, ed. M.B. al-Kharsān, 2 vols., Najaf, 1386/1966, vol. 2, p. 15; Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī, *al-Durar al-najafiyya*, Qumm, copy of litho. ed., s.d., pp. 281 and 287; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 110 vols., Tehran-Qumm, 1376-1392/1956-1972, vol. 33, p. 173 sqq.; vol. 44, pp. 128 sqq.

86   On the exclusivity of the title for ʿAlī, see for example al-Sayyārī, *Kitāb al-qirāʾāt*, ed. Kohlberg and Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification*, hadith n° 160; al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Rasūlī Maḥallātī, Qumm, 1380/1960, vol. 1, p. 276, n° 274; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī* Ṭālib, Beirut, 1405/1985, vol. 3, p. 55; al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, Beirut, 1403/1983, vol. 5, pp. 469-470, n° 19900. On the *muʾminūn* in the meaning indicated and *amīr al-muʾminīn* in the sense of the "Last Emperor" of Christian texts see Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, pp. 16, 81-82, 96-97, 125, 143-144; Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet*, *passim*, especially pp. 205 sqq.; id., "'The Reign of God Has Come'", pp. 529-530 and 533; Van Reeth, "L'Hégire et la fin du monde", p. 214.

87   Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, ed. Mīrzā Kūčebāghī, Tabriz, 2ᵉ ed. s.d. (vers 1960) (= ed. K), section 2, chapters 7, nos 5 and 8, pp. 71-72; new edition by ʿA. Zakīzādeh Ranānī, 2 vols. with Persian translation, Qumm, 1391 solar/2012 (= ed. Z), pp. 289 and 291; also chapter 10, nos 5, p. 77 (ed. K) = pp. 308-309 (ed. Z); Furāt al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr*, ed. M. al-Kāẓim, Tehran, 1410/1990, pp. 121-122; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 3, p. 400; vol. 23, p. 208; vol. 35, p. 369; al-Huwayzī, *Tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn*, Qumm, 1412/1991, vol. 1, p. 595. In verse 19:21 of the Quran, it is Jesus who is called "the miraculous sign of God".

88   Al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir*, section 2 no. 9, p. 74 (ed. K); pp. 297-298 (ed. Z); al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 39, p. 273, no. 50.

"The *walāya* of ʿAlī with the Prophet has nothing earthly about it; it comes from heaven, from the very Mouth of God (*mushāfahatan*, i.e. the message received orally by Muḥammad directly from God)."[89]

Verse 7 of Surah 13 alludes to two important religious figures: "You are but a Warner (*mundhir*) whereas every people has a Guide (*hādin*)". Shiʿi commentators unanimously maintain that the first refers to Muḥammad and the second to ʿAlī;[90] in other words Muḥammad, the prophet, warns of the End of the World but directs his people to follow the guidance of their Messiah ʿAlī.

5   Rewriting of History and Fabrication of a New Collective Memory

In Islam, as in other religions with apocalyptic prophecies, the problems begin when the End of the World does not occur; when both the "warning" prophet and the awaited Messiah die without time coming to an end. And for the new Arab religion, other events made things even more complex: unending civil wars, dazzling conquests, the rapid building of an immense empire and the establishment of a strong and more or less centralized state, that of the Umayyad Caliphate. Clearly, a strong state with powerful rulers at its head, not at all motivated by the idea of the end of the world, would never be compatible with Messianism and apocalyptic aspirations.[91] The sum of these factors had inevitable consequences: the rewriting of history, the reinterpretation of Tradition and the distortion of the texts with, as their aim, the creation of a new collective memory.

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89 Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, ed. J. Muṣṭafawī, 4 vol., with Persian translation, Tehran, n.d. (the fourth volume translated by H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī dates from 1386/1966), "Kitāb al-ḥujja", vol. 2, p. 166; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 28, p. 306, no. 13. To be compared with Ibn al-Biṭrīq al-Ḥillī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ al-waḥy al-mubīn fī manāqib amīr al-muʾminīn*, ed. M.B. Maḥmūdī, Tehran, 1406/1986, p. 98 and Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Ṭarāʾif fī maʿrifat madhāhib al-ṭawāʾif*, Qumm, 1400/1979, p. 101. See here chap. 1, footnotes 78 and the ones following and the afferent texts.

90 Al-Sayyārī, *Kitāb al-qirāʾāt*, p. 70, no 270 (Arabic text); al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 204, nos 7-9; al-Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*, ed. M.B. al-Maḥmūdī, Beirut, 1393/1974, vol. 1, pp. 293-303, nos 398-416; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, vol. 3, p. 265; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 40, p. 212, no. 12.

91 See however S. Shoemaker, *The Apocalypse of Empire*, *passim*; or M. Tillier, "ʿAbd al-Malik, Muḥammad et le Jugement dernier: le Dôme du Rocher comme expression d'une orthodoxie islamique", in *Les vivants et les morts dans les sociétés médiévales*, Paris, 2018, pp. 341-365. It is very clear that after Muḥammad and with the advent of the Umayyad dynasty, the meaning of messianism and of the apocalyptic evolved greatly.

According to Paul Casanova, and more recently Fred Donner and Mahmoud Ayoub, Muḥammad died still convinced that the 'Hour' was imminent.[92] The inconvenient fact about such a hypothesis is its radicality, for if one accepts it one has to consider that almost the entire Quranic corpus and the Hadith – everything that is not related to the end times – were invented after the death of the Prophet. There are however a number of elements which nuance this hypothesis and make it possible to reach less radical conclusions.

According to the traditional chronology, the prophetic career of Muḥammad lasted more than twenty years, from 610 to 632 of the Common Era. Even if those dates, like those of many other events of the *sīra*, are not reliable (precisely as a consequence of the rewriting of history under discussion), it is reasonable to believe that this career lasted many long years. To the mind that described the End of the World in such words as *al-sāʿa* (the Hour, the Instant, the immediate delay), *al-āzifa* (what is happening) or *al-wāqiʿa* (what is "falling") and had announced the imminence of the Day of Judgement, these years would have seemed extremely long, as they also must have done for those who believed in him. Muḥammad own beliefs might very well have evolved too during that period: perhaps to still believe in the coming of the Hour but in a less immediate future. The Quran itself seems to reflect this evolution. Beside the verses declaring the unavoidable immediacy of the Hour (see the passages from the Quran as well as from Hadith quoted in part 1 above), other passages stress, to allay the incredulity the sceptical, that only God has knowledge of the Hour (*ʿilm al-sāʿa*, see verses 7:187; 31:34; 41:47; 43:85), that "a day for God" is the equivalent of a thousand human years (verses 22:47 and 32:5); and even as many as fifty thousand years (verse 70:4). In addition, terms expressing nuances and hesitations (*ʿasā an*, "it could be that …"; *laʿalla* "perhaps") about the coming of the Hour, or please for patience, occur in other verses (e.g. 11:8; 17:51-52; 27:72; 33:63; 40:77; 72:25; see also 22:55 or 70:6-7).[93] The same tendency is perceptible in the hadith, when the Prophet declares that the coming of the Hour could take a century.[94] Other extremely recurrent elements recorded from many different sources, some from divergent or even rival factions, would be inexplicable if Muḥammad had all his life considered the end of the world

92   Casanova, *Mohammed et la fin du monde, passim*; F. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, Princeton, 1998, *passim* and especially pp. 45 sqq.; M. Ayoub, *The Crisis of Muslim History: Religion and Politics in Early Islam*, Oxford, 2003, pp. 144 sqq.

93   Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet*, pp. 162-163.

94   Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre*, vol. 1, pp. 535-536; Casanova, *Mohammed et la fin du monde*, p. 17; Bashear, "Muslim Apocalypses", pp. 90-91.

to be imminent; for example: his ardent desire to have a male descendant;[95] his insistence on the marriage of ʿAlī and Fāṭima; the rich oasis of Fadak he left as an heirloom to his daughter Fāṭima and her family, and in particular to his only two male descendants, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn:[96] he could very well have had his succession in mind. The choice of ʿAlī, the father of his only male offspring (besides the other special relationships which would have bound both men), seems the obvious one: and a decisive one if the Prophet or some of his followers believed ʿAlī, to be the Saviour of the end times.[97]

The rewriting of history and the forging of a new collective memory seem to have begun from the very outset of the Umayyad Caliphate (perhaps even before it), for they were historical enemies of the Banū Hāshim in general and of the Alids in particular, at least since the battle of Badr. The objective of this apparently systematic policy was to replace the figure of the Prophet with that of the Caliph. The defining symbol of this process was to be ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the conqueror of Jerusalem, to whom the messianic title of Fārūq (see above) was awarded.[98] In his letter to caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (reign 65-86/685-705), the

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95   Apart from dozens of hadiths, the Quran itself carries the trace of that desire, perhaps indirectly implied when, in verse 108:3, the enemy of the Prophet is called *abtar*, literally "the one who can only have daughters" – given that this was the term used by those who reviled Muḥammad as long as he did not have his two grandsons according to Shiʿi commentators.

96   On the important juridical and religious implications of that act see W. Madelung, "Social Legislation in *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*" in A. Cilardo (ed.), *Islam and Globalisation. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. Proceeding of the 25th Congress of l'Union Européenne des Islamisants et Arabisants*, Louvain-Paris-Walpole, 2013, pp. 197-203; Id., "Introduction" to the part titled "History and Historiography" in F. Daftary & G. Miskinzoda (eds.), *The Study of Shiʿi Islam: History, Theology and Law*, London-New York, 2014, pp. 3-16.

97   On ʿAlī as sole possible successor of Muḥammad, see W. Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*, Cambridge, 1997, *passim*; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Considérations sur l'expression *dīn ʿAlī*. Aux origines de la foi Shiʿite" (here chapter 3). If one accepts the hypothesis of a religious evolution in Muḥammad with regard to the immediacy of the Hour, the thesis of scholars such as P. Casanova, F. Donner or M. Ayoub (see above footnote 91) according to which the Prophet did not choose a successor for himself because the imminence of the end times no longer made such a choice pertinent, would no longer be defensible.

98   P. Crone, M. Cook, *Hagarism*, p. 5; P. Crone and M. Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, Cambridge, 1986; S. Bashear, "The Title '*Fārūq*' and Its Association with ʿUmar I"; many works by Avraham Hakim on ʿUmar, among others: "Conflicting images of lawgivers: the caliph and the Prophet. *Sunnat* ʿUmar and *sunnat* Muḥammad" in H. Berg (ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, Leiden, 2003, pp. 159-178; "ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb, calife par la Grâce de Dieu", *Arabica* 54.3 (2008), pp. 317-336; "ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb: l'autorité religieuse et morale", *Arabica* 55.1 (2008), pp. 1-34.

renowned Umayyad governor of Iraq, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 95/714) declared that the caliph is superior to the prophet-messenger (*rasūl*) because in the eyes of God he plays a more important role in the fulfilment of God's will. Some powerful figures of ʿAbd al-Malik's court considered that the circumambulation rituals performed around his palace were more rewarded by God than those around the tomb of Muḥammad.[99] The public cursing of ʿAlī from the pulpits of the mosques and the propaganda of the state apparatus, became systematic, from the reign of Muʿāwiya I, the first Umayyad caliph, onwards. The hatred of ʿAlī, of his family – which was of course that of the Prophet – and of his followers reached its peak at Karbalā in 61/680, with the massacre of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, the grandson of the Prophet, and almost all of his circle by order of the caliph Yazīd I.[100] An official version of the Quran was written at the demand, and under the supervision, of the Caliph and was distributed in all the great cities of the empire; simultaneously the other editions of the Quran were sought out and destroyed. In parallel, the collection of an 'official' corpus of Hadith was assembled, with the same end in view, mostly in the entourage of ʿAbd al-Malik and of the court scholar Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742).[101] A wily politician, Muʿāwiya, who was based in Syria – a largely Christian country – had adopted a strongly pro-Christian attitude and policy (without, however, any reference to the Quran, or to Muḥammad, or Jesus, or any other prophet), recuperating, with the same motives, the "Judeo-Christian tendency" of the message of Muḥammad and of his first followers, whilst attempting to obfuscate the Prophet's messianic dimension, still vigorous in Alid circles.[102]

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99   P. Crone, M. Hinds, *op. cit.*, pp. 19 sqq.; E.-M. Gallez, *Le messie et son prophète*, vol. 2, pp. 441 sqq.

100   See now M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux et le Coran parlant*, in particular the introduction and chapter 1.

101   On these questions see now S. Bashear, "Qurʾān 2:114 and Jerusalem", *BSOAS* 52 (1989), pp. 251-238 (included in id., *Studies in Early Islamic Tradition*, article n° 11); Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It*, pp. 560-573; De Prémare, *Les fondations de l'islam*, especially chapter 15, pp. 278 sqq.; id., *Aux origines du Coran*, *passim*; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Coran silencieux*, chapter 2; F. Déroche, *Qurʾans of the Umayyads. A First Overview*, Leiden, 2013, especially the introduction; id., "Contrôler l'écriture. Sur quelques caractéristiques de corans de la période omeyyade", in M. Azaiez et S. Mervin (eds.), *Le Coran. Nouvelles approches*, Paris, 2014, pp. 39-55; on al-Zuhrī see for example M. Lecker, "Biographical Notes on Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī", *JSS* 41.1 (1996), pp. 21-63 (included in id., *Jews and Arabs in Pre- and Early Islamic Arabia*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1998, article n° 16); H. Motzki, "The Collection of the Qurʾān. A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments", *Der Islam* 78 (2001), pp. 1-34, in particular pp. 22-29.

102   See for example P. Crone, M. Cook, *Hagarism*, p. 11; G. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1987; S. Bashear, "Qibla Musharriqa and Early Muslim Prayer in Churches", *MW* 81 (1991), pp. 267-282 (= *Studies in*

That is why he is the principal hero of most Syriac chronicles of the period which, probably in conform to the Umayyad propaganda, removed ʿAlī from the list of Arab "kings" after Muḥammad.[103] With ʿAbd al-Malik, yet again, the process of "de-Messianization" becomes decisive. The figure of Muḥammad as the holiest and the last of the prophets is rehabilitated, but at the same time his message, originally 'universalist', uniting all monotheists in the body of the 'Faithful' (*muʾminūn*) is now strongly Arabized, its differences with and, soon, its superiority to Judaism and Christianity affirmed, and its followers rebaptized Muslims (*muslimūn*). The supreme symbols of the inauguration of the new Arab religion were, on the one hand: the construction of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem; the formal introduction of a 'state' Quran to be known as the Vulgate of ʿUthmān, now declared independent of Jewish and Christian scriptures as 'the book of the Muslims' and on the other hand, the sacralisation of the Arab cities of Mecca and Medina.[104] Jesus becomes a prophet virtually indistinguishable from others in the Quran who, in the words of Alfred-Louis de Prémare: "had been, from start to finish, controlled by the Umayyad family, from "Uthmān to ʿAbd al-Malik via Muʿāwiya and Marwān".[105] Two other Umayyad figures also played a crucial role in imposing the "official" Quran: the two celebrated governors of Iraq, ʿUbaydallāb b. Ziyād, known as Ibn Ziyād (governor from 56 to 67/675 to 686) and al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf,[106] referred to above.

Early Islamic Tradition, article n° VI); R.G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 485 sqq.; Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, pp. 176 sq., 180 sqq., 192 sqq., 222; Id., "Umayyad Efforts at Legitimation: the Umayyad's Silent Heritage" in A. Borrut and P.M. Cobb (eds.), *Umayyad Legacies: Medieval Memories from Syria to Spain*, Leiden, 2010, pp. 187-211. See also A. Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir: l'espace syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et les premiers Abbassides (v. 72-193/692-809)*, Leiden, 2011; id., "Introduction: la fabrique de l'histoire et de la tradition islamiques" dans id. (ed.), *Ecriture de l'histoire et processus de canonisation dans les premiers siècles de l'islam*, n° spécial *REMMM*, 129 (2011-1), pp. 17-30.

103 A. Genet, "Le premier siècle de l'islam vu par les chroniqueurs syriaques", pp. 106 sqq. (on admirative portrayals of Muʿāwiya); pp. 69 sqq. and 85 (on the absence of ʿAlī from among the caliphs).

104 Apart from the studies mentioned in footnotes 100 et 101, see also H. Busse, "Monotheismus und islamische Christologie in der Bauinschrift des Felsendoms in Jerusalem", *Theologische Quartalschrift* 161 (1981), pp. 168-188; P. Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*, Princeton, 1987, *passim*; S. Bashear, "Jesus in Early Muslim *Shahāda* and Related Issues: A New Perspective", published for the first time and posthumously in id., *Studies in Early Islamic Tradition*, article n° XV, pp. 1-18; M. Cook, *The Koran: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2000, pp. 118 sqq.; C. Robinson, *ʿAbd al-Malik*, Oxford, 2005, pp. 77 sqq., 102 sqq.; Shoemaker, *The Death of A Prophet*, chapter 4 ("From Believers to Muslims, from Jerusalem to the Ḥijāz: Confessional Identity and Sacred Geography in Early Islam").

105 A.-L.de Prémare, *Les fondations de l'islam*, pp. 290-291; *Aux origines du Coran*, pp. 90-91.

106 See A.-L. Prémare, *Les fondations de l'islam*, pp. 292 sqq.; O. Hamdan, "The Second *Maṣāḥif* Project: A Step towards the Canonization of the Qurʾānic Text", in A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai

The common denominator between all these major historical figures is their implacable hatred of ʿAlī and the Alids; Ibn Ziyād was even directly involved in the massacre of Karbalā. The thesis of *taḥrīf*, of the "falsified Quran", largely current in Shiʿi circles until the 4th/10th century and according to which the power hostile to ʿAlī and the Family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*) had removed all mention of them from the "original Quran", thus gains in plausibility.[107] It is interesting to note that, in a letter which the Emperor Leo III addressed in around 719 CE to the Umayyad caliph ʿUmar II, it is said that, in the program of systematic destruction of the versions of the Quran under al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, the only text to survive was the Codex of ʿAlī (called here by his *kunya* Abū Turāb).[108] The idea which emerges from this letter is that ʿAlī's version of the Quran must have been more protected than the others, probably because it was of crucial importance to his followers. Be that as it may, the "Quranic" passages which are not included in the extant Quran, but are recorded in ancient Shiʿi documents, are said to come from the Quranic codex of ʿAlī (*muṣḥaf ʿAlī*) (see chapter 1 above).

Little by little, even those who believed in ʿAlī as the Messiah of the end times changed their minds, most probably a few years after his death, when hopes of his "return to earth" faded. The Alids, and later the Shiʿis, continued to contest entire parts of the history which had been rewritten under the control of the caliphs and the collective memory which it imposed, and which were progressively accepted as "orthodox". Nevertheless, the Shiʿis were part of the same empire, of the same community and of the same religion as the others. To completely maintain all their original doctrines would have meant to saw off the branch they were sitting on. Some changes were introduced into the doctrines. Of his messianic pretentions, ʿAlī lost his apocalyptic dimension, but preserved his main spiritual functions: his theophanic nature and his inspired guidance. He thus became the Imam *par excellence*, the first and the father of

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and M. Marx (eds.), *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu*, Leiden, 2010, pp. 795-835; Amir-Moezzi, *Coran silencieux*, chapter 2, pp. 79 sqq.

107   On the question of the falsification of the Quran and the studies dedicated to it see now E. Kohlberg and M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification*, introduction; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Coran silencieux*, in particular chapters 1 et 2.

108   A. Jeffery, "Ghevond's text of the Correspondance between ʿUmar II and Leo III", *The Harvard Theological Review* 37 (1944), pp. 269-332, citation p. 298; quoted by Crone-Cook, *Hagarism*, p. 168, footnote 21; E.-M. Gallez, *Le messie et son prophète*, vol. 2, p. 228. The history of Ghevond/Lewond is now translated into English by Z. Arzoumanian, *History of Lewond, the Emminent Vardapet of the Armenians*, Wynnewood, 1982. Regarding the *kunya* Abū Turāb of ʿAlī, see E. Kohlberg, "Abū Turāb", *BSOAS* 41 (1978) (included in Id., *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shīʿism*, Variorum, Aldershot, 1991, article 6).

all the other imams, his sons, with countless descendants, and recognized as such by the manifold Shiʿi currents of the first Hijri centuries. His *qāʾimiyya*, his role of "resurrector guide", who triggers the Day of Judgement, was transferred to one or another of his descendants, according to the different currents of belief. The figure of the imam as it emerged from the ancient sources became the pivot of Shiʿi religion. The historical imam became the theophanic locus of a pre-existential, metaphysical, spiritual Imam who makes manifest the Names and Attributes of God. Shiʿi believers speak of the two natures of ʿAlī, the human and the divine, employing the terms *nāsūt* and *lāhūt*, nouns of Syriac origin which, when they appear in Christian sources, describe the double nature of Christ (see chap. 1 above). The imam in general, and ʿAlī first and foremost among them, is said to be the First (*al-awwal*) and the Last (*al-ākhir*), the alpha and the omega of Christ's affirmation, words that are at the same time Quranic divine Names. Likewise he is, as the imam, the "Speaking Quran/Book" (*al-Qurʾān/al-kitāb al-nāṭiq*), the veritable Word of God, the Logos contained in the Quran, the "Silent Book/Guide" (*al-kitāb/al-imām al-ṣāmit*). ʿAlī and the imams of his descendance thus prolong prophecy, which is communication with God and the transmission of his divine messages to mankind. It is true that the words originally describing that function (*risāla, nubuwwa*) are no longer used in that context, most probably in order not to contradict the dogmas, later accepted by all, that Muḥammad was the "last prophet" but that, according to the most authoritative sources, all his prophetic qualities and powers now fall to the imams.[109] Shiʿism thus became, from very early on, the religion of the Imam, just as Christianity is the religion of the Christ.[110] Is this what the unusual expression the "religion of ʿAlī" (*dīn ʿAlī*) means? In what way is it distinct from the religion of Muḥammad which was in the end called "Islam"? That is what we shall see in the next chapter.

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109   See here chapters 5 to 7.

110   A great number of my works deal with those subjects, among others: *Le Guide divin dans le Shiʿisme originel, La religion discrète* or *Le Coran silencieux et le Coran parlant*. While being labelled as heterodox, or even "heretical" by Sunni "orthodoxy", a good number of Shiʿi doctrines seem to be among the most ancient in Islam and seem to be closer to the initial movement of Muḥammad than what heresiographical Sunni works may let us think. The phenomenon is not new. It has been masterfully analysed since the 1930s and applied to the beginnings of Christianity, by Walter Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*, Tübingen, 1934; English translation R.A. Kraft and G. Krodel, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, Philadelphia, 1971 and French translation by P. Vuagnat, Ch. and S. Mimouni, *Orthodoxie et hérésie aux débuts du christianisme*, Paris, 2009².

Reflections on the Expression *dīn ʿAlī*: The Origins of the Shiʿi Faith

In Shiʿi lands generally, and especially in Iran, there are a number of compound first names ending in ʿAlī. Many are very common: for instance, *Ḥusayn-ʿAlī, Muḥammad-ʿAlī, Jaʿfar-ʿAlī*; others have a more literary, even poetic resonance: *Sayf-ʿAlī* ("Sword of ʿAlī"), *Nūr-ʿAlī* ("Light of ʿAlī"), *Maḥabbat-ʿAlī* or *Mehr-ʿAlī* ("Love of ʿAlī"), *Īmān-ʿAlī* ("Faith of ʿAlī"); still others are really unusual: *Shīr-ʿAlī* ("Lion-ʿAlī"), *Gurg-ʿAlī* ("Wolf ʿAlī"), *Chirāg-ʿAlī* ("Lamp of ʿAlī") and *Dīn-ʿAlī* ("Religion of ʿAlī").

The last name has always intrigued me: "ʿAlī's religion". Is this not the same as Islam, as Muḥammad's religion? How might one explain this term, especially given that *Islām* and *dīn Muḥammad* are used as first names as well? Imagine my surprise when, some years ago, I came across the expression *dīn ʿAlī* in some passages from early historiographical works. What does this term stand for? How should it be understood? While the context of this study is obviously not the same as the one in which I first asked the question, this chapter is an attempt to answer it.[1] It is in five parts:

(1)   *Dīn ʿAlī* in the works of the historiographers;
(2)   The uniqueness of ʿAlī;
(3)   Themes concerning ʿAlī and the Alids;
(4)   The basis for the religion of ʿAlī
    4a   Quranic content
    4b   The pre-Islamic content
(5)   Reactions and repercussions.

1   *Dīn ʿAlī* in the Works of the Historiographers

In certain passages of his monumental work *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa l-mulūk*, al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 /923) includes some records in which the expression *dīn ʿAlī* appears. The first is found in a long account reported by ʿAṭiyya b. Bilāl about

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1 I extend my cordial thanks to Professors Wilferd Madelung and Etan Kohlberg for their pertinent comments during the writing this chapter. Any imperfections that still remain are the responsibility solely of the author.

the battle of the Camel in 36/656.[2] At one point during the battle, ʿAmr b. Yathribī al-Ḍabbī *al-rājiz*, a poet-warrior in the camp of the confederates allied against ʿAlī, killed three of his enemies, ʿIlbāʾ b. al-Haytham al-Sadūsī, Hind b. ʿAmr al-Jamalī and Zayd b. Ṣūḥān, before being overcome by ʿAmmār b. Yāsir, one of ʿAlī's oldest supporters. After he had been taken prisoner, the poet is said to have recited this *rajaz*:

> Let he who knows me not, learn that I am Ibn Yathribī, slayer of ʿIlbāʾ and Hind al-Jamalī. As well as of the son of Ṣūḥān, all (adepts) of ʿAlī's religion.[3]

He was then led to ʿAlī, who refused his request for *amān*, and ordered his execution. According to the author of this account, Ibn Yathribī was the only captive to whom ʿAlī denied a pardon. Al-Ṭabarī does not give any explanation of his intransigeance.

The reader might reasonably conclude that the *rājiz* (poet-warrior) was executed for rather haughtily boasting that he had killed three of ʿAlī's most loyal companions. In the same period, another erudite scholar, Ibn Durayd Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Azdī (d. 321/933), also includes the text of the poem in his *Kitāb al-ishtiqāq*, adding that in order to justify this unique execution, ʿAlī was supposed to have said:

> He [i.e Ibn Yathribī] claimed to have killed [my three companions] because they confessed the religion of ʿAlī; but the religion of ʿAlī is the religion of Muḥammad (*zaʿama annahu qatalahum ʿalā dīn ʿAlī wa dīn ʿAlī dīn Muḥammad*).[4]

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2 Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ed. M.J. de Goeje *et al.*, Leiden, 1879-1901, series 1, pp. 3196 sq.; ed. M.A.F. Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1960, vol. 4, pp. 514 sq.

3 *Anā li-man yunkirunī ibnu yathribī qātilu ʿilbāʾi wa hindi l-jamalī wa ibnin li-ṣūḥāna ʿalā dīni ʿAlī*; al-Ṭabarī, ed. De Goeje, series 1, p. 3199; ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 4, p. 517, varies slightly: '*In taqtulūnī* [if you plan to kill me, know that etc.] *fa anā ibnu yathribī qātilu ʿilbāʾi wa hindi l-jamalī thumma bni ṣūḥāna ʿalā dīni ʿAlī.*' See also al-Mufīd, *Kitāb al-Jamal aw al-nuṣra fī ḥarb al-Baṣra*, Najaf, 1963, p. 146; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, Najaf, 1956, vol. 3, p. 156; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, ed. based on the edition by Kumpānī, 90 vols, in 110 tomes, Tehran and Qumm, 1376-1392/1956-1972, vol. 32, p. 176, in which ʿAmmār b. Yāsir shouts at Ibn Yathribī: 'It is as a follower of ʿAlī's religion that I fight you (*uqātiluka ʿalā dīni ʿAlī*)'.

4 Ibn Durayd, *Kitāb al-ishtiqāq*, ed. ʿA.M. Hārūn, Baghdad, 1399/1979, p. 413; the version of the poem by Ibn Durayd is slightly different: '*qataltu ʿilbāʾa wa hinda l-jamalī wa ibnan li-ṣūḥāna ʿalā dīni ʿAlī.*' In the margins of the *unicum* used by ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, dated seventh/thirteenth century, are earlier annotations that often include different interpretations (see the editor's introduction, ibid., pp. 36-37). For the passage cited, the notes in the

According to Ibn Durayd, Ibn Yathribī was put death because of the distinction he made between the religion of ʿAlī and that of Muḥammad, which implicitly accused ʿAlī of professing a religion different from Islam.[5] Other passages in al-Ṭabarī call into question the explanation provided by *Kitāb al-ishtiqāq*, since in this case the expression is used by ʿAlī's supporters. One of these passages appears in a report by the famous Abū Mikhnaf (based on ʿUbayd Allāh b. al-Ḥurr al-Juʿfī) about Muʿāwiya's order to arrest and execute a large number of Alid rebels led by Ḥujr b. ʿAdī. During an interrogation, one of ʿAlī's partisans, Karīm b. ʿAfīf al-Khathʿamī, is said to have had the following exchange with Muʿāwiya:

> Al-Khathʿamī: 'Fear God, Muʿāwiya [literally: God! God! O Muʿāwiya] for you are be led [inevitably] from this transitory abode to the final and eternal resting place; there you will be questioned about the reasons for my execution and you will be asked to explain why you shed my blood.'
>
> Muʿāwiya: 'What say you regarding ʿAlī?'
>
> Al-Khathʿamī: '[I say] The same as you: I dissociate myself from the religion of ʿAlī, by which he submits to God (*atabarraʾu min dīni ʿAlī alladhī kāna yadīnu llāha bihi*).' At this [declaration], having difficulty in devising a reply, Muʿāwiya remained silent.[6]

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margin follow al-Ṭabarī's version in the edition prepared under the supervision of De Goeje; *ibid.*, p. 413, note 2, *in fine*.

5   L. Caetani makes an error of interpretation by comparing this punishment of Ibn Yathribī to that of ʿAbd Allāh b. Sabaʾ, inflicted, according to tradition, by ʿAlī himself, *Annali dell'Islam*, Milan, 1905-1925, vol. 9, p. 142; on ʿAbd Allāh b. Sabaʾ, see M.G.S. Hodgson, *EI2*; S. Anthony, *The Caliph and the Heretic. Ibn Sabaʾ and the Origins of Shīʿism*, Leiden, 2012. To accuse ʿAlī of professing a deviant religion is entirely different to claiming to defend ʿAlī's cause while professing an 'extremist' doctrine; this error is pointed out by W. Madelung in *The Succession to Muḥammad*, Cambridge, 1997, p. 178, n. 183. Another historiographical source, *Kitāb al-futūḥ* by Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī (d. 314/926) gives as the sole reason for the execution of Ibn Yathribī, his violent animosity towards ʿAlī; see Ibn Aʿtham, *al-Futūḥ*, Persian trans. Harawī (sixth/twelfth century), ed. Gh. Ṭabāṭabāʾī Majd, Tehran, 1374 Sh./1995, pp. 432-433.

6   Al-Ṭabarī, ed. De Goeje, vol. 2, p. 143; ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 5, p. 276. In speaking of these Alids, Muʿāwiya calls them 'rebels among the Turābiyya Sabaʾiyya', a reference to the *kunya* Abū Turāb for ʿAlī (see E. Kohlberg, 'Abū Turāb', *BSOAS*, 41 1978, pp. 347-352; rpr. in *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shīʿism* [Aldershot, 1991] article VI) and to ʿAbd Allāh b. Sabaʾ. See also the abridged version of this account in al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol. 4/a, ed. M. Schloessinger and M.J. Kister, Jerusalem, 1972, p. 225. Admittedly, al-Khathʿamī's response is ambiguous, hence Muʿāwiya's embarrassment. His 'dissociation' from ʿAlī's religion is surely based on the obligation of *taqiyya*, but one wonders if the expression *dīn ʿAlī* does not in fact stem from Muʿāwiya, or more generally from ʿAlī's adversaries. The expression does indeed seem to have been problematic for at least some of ʿAlī's supporters, since it could make a distinction between 'the religion of ʿAlī' and Islam. According to a report by al-Ṭabarī, during the battle of the Camel, when to save their lives the Azd of Baṣra, declared themselves followers of ʿAlī's

Still according to al-Ṭabarī, during al-Mukhtār's revolt, Rufāʿa b. Shaddād al-Hamdānī, a supporter of the rebel, recited the following verse in the heat of the battle:

> I am the son of Shaddād, adept of ʿAlī's religion /I am not an ally of ʿUthmān, offspring of a goat.[7]

Finally, according to a tradition reported by Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849) in *al-Muṣannaf*, during the battle of the Camel, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, the son of ʿAlī, spared the life of an adversary when the latter claimed to have adopted ʿAlī's religion.[8]

Some elements of this account seem to indicate that the expression is authentic. First is the rarity of such occurrences and their somewhat fortuitous nature. In addition to the care taken in highlighting an expression, one of the features of the apocryphal is its repetitious and frequent usage.[9] I certainly do not claim to have thoroughly examined al-Ṭabarī's monumental *History* in its entirety, but I have read it attentively, and from these few passages, I believe we have a fairly accurate picture. What is more, the expression is attributed to the fiercest adversaries as well as to the loyal and devout supporters of ʿAlī, which tends to indicate that it was a current expression known by all and that its usage in historiographical traditions was not dictated by partisanship; this moreover would explain its somewhat fortuitous occurrences, with no particular motive for the context in which they appear. During the course of the

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religion (*naḥnu ʿalā dīni ʿAlī*), a man from the Banī Layth of Kūfa (no doubt an Alid) mocked them for what they have just said (al-Ṭabarī, ed. de Goeje, vol. 1, pp. 3189-3190; ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 4, p. 512). However, as we shall see, the expression is sometimes unambiguously attributed to supporters of ʿAlī. Cf. also verses by ʿAlī's Companion al-Nuʿmān b. al-ʿAjlān al-Anṣārī, praising 'the religion of ʿAlī' after the battle of Ṣiffīn, according to al-Minqarī, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, ed. A.M. Hārūn, Cairo, 1382/1962, p. 380 and Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, ed. M.A.F. Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1965, vol. 1, p. 149.

7 *Anā bnu shaddāda ʿalā dīni ʿAlī/lastu li-ʿUthmāna bni arwā bi-walī* (al-Ṭabarī, ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 6, p. 50). Usage of *arwā* (lit. 'mountain goat') is a play on words with *ʿaffān* (the name of ʿUthmān's father, one meaning of which is 'animal with malodorous skin or hair'). Al-Majlisī reports this account deriving from al-Ṭabarī's *History*, but his version presents significant differences with the *Taʾrīkh*: for example, the individual is named al-Aḥraṣ b. Shaddād and his verse is a response to a verse by his adversary Ibn Ḍabʿān al-Kalbī: 'I am Ibn Ḍabʿān al-Karīm al-Mufaḍḍal / One of the leaders among those who dissociate themselves from the religion of ʿAlī (*anā bnu Ḍabʿānā l-karīmi l-mufaḍḍali/ min ʿaṣabatin yabraʾūna min dīni ʿAlī*)', *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 45, p. 381.

8 Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. S.M. al-Laḥḥām, 9 vols, Beirut, 1409/1989, vol. 8, p. 711.

9 See e.g. J. Schacht, *A Revaluation of Islamic Traditions*, JRAS (1949), pp. 140-152; G.H.A. Juynboll, *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature: Discussions in Modern Egypt*, Leiden, 1969, pp. 30sq.

following study, we will consider other indications that the expression could indeed have existed at the dawn of Islam.

2   The Uniqueness of ʿAlī

To my knowledge, ʿAlī is the only figure of early Islam – apart from the Prophet of course – with whom the term *dīn* is associated. Thanks to the analyses of R.B. Serjeant and especially to the pioneering study of M.M. Bravmann, we know that, just as in the earliest days of the new religion of the Arabs, *dīn* in pre-Islamic times designated a set of both secular and sacred laws.[10] By extension, *dīn* also referred to submission to a law or a leader, in contrast with the anarchy and wild behaviour associated with *jahl*, or ignorance. The interpretation of 'religion', initially derived from this partly sacred, partly secular sense of the term, then gradually became more narrowly defined in Islamic times.[11] The use of the expression *dīn ʿAlī* is all the more remarkable since, when speaking of his most notable contemporaries, the three other *rāshidūn* (rightly guided) caliphs, the sources employ the term *sunna*, almost never *dīn*. Here too, the studies of M.M. Bravmann (correcting J. Schacht's analyses), followed by those of G.H.A. Juynboll, demonstrate that *sunna* was initially a clearly marked path from which one could only waver willfully, and, by extension, the path of the elders or sages in a tribe that one ought to follow scrupulously. Although the Quran defines this term as the 'way of God', at the dawn of the religion, *sunna* includes a range of both secular and religious behaviours, attitudes, wise lore and idealised exemplary figures, in this instance the Prophet himself and the first caliphs.[12] Both historiographical and purely religious sources allude to the

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10   R.B. Serjeant, 'Ḥaram and ḥawṭah, the Sacred Enclave in Arabia', in A.R. Badawi (ed.), *Mélanges Taha Husain*, Cairo, 1962, pp. 41-50, esp. p. 42 and p. 50, and 'The "Constitution" of Medina', *The Islamic Quarterly*, 8 (1964), pp. 3-16, esp. 13 (rpr. in *Studies in Arabian History and Civilisation*, London, 1981, articles III and V); M.M. Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam*, Leiden, 1972, see index under '*dāna (dyn)*', '*dīn*', and pp. 4-7 '*Murūwah and dīn*'.

11   Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background*, p. 34 and note 1 in which the author argues that the theories advanced by Nöldeke and Horovitz about the Iranian origin of the term are irrelevant; see also U. Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims*, Princeton, 1995, *s.v.*; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Remarques sur le terme *dîn* dans le Coran", M. De Souza, A. Peters-Coustot et F.-X. Romanacce (eds.), *Le sacré dans tous ses états. Catégories du vocabulaire religieux et sociétés, de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 2012, pp. 281-296.

12   Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background*, see index under '*sanna*', '*sunnah*'; G.H.A. Juynboll, "Some New Ideas on the Development of *Sunna* as a Technical Term in Early Islam", *JSAI*, 10 (1987), pp. 97-118, esp. pp. 97 sq. (rpr. in *Studies on the Origins and Uses of Islamic Ḥadīth*, London, 1996, article V); J. Chabbi, *Le Seigneur des tribus. L'Islam de Mahomet*, Paris, 1997,

*sunna*s of the first caliphs. Al-Balādhurī (d. *circa* 302/892) refers to the *sunna* of Abū Bakr and of ʿUmar, but also to that of the Khārijis, during the arbitration of the battle of Ṣiffīn, in al-Ṭabarī.[13] The expression '*sunna* of the Two ʿUmars', that is, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, is found again in the poetry of Farazdaq (ca. 109/728),[14] and Ibn Abī Yaʿlā (d. 526/1133), who while quoting the *Kitāb al-sunna* by al-Barbahārī (d. 329/941), refers to the *sunna* of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān.[15] In my research so far, I have encountered the expression *sunnat ʿAlī* only once, in an anonymous historiographical text from the second-third/eighth-ninth centuries edited as *Akhbār al-dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya*.[16] M. Sharon's remarkable analysis of this work shows how this pro-ʿAbbasid source deals favourably with ʿAlī and the Alids,[17] and applies the term *sunna* to ʿAlī; thereby acknowledging his role as an ideal model in common with the other *rāshidūn*. That the expression *sunnat ʿAlī* occurs rarely or never seems all the more surprising that, in both secular and the ritual matters at that time, ʿAlī seems to have had the same powers as the first two caliphs. This is no doubt why, much later, marked by their aversion to the Prophet's first three successors, the Shiʿis would in many cases follow the legal teachings of Ibn ʿAbbās rather than those of ʿAlī.[18] Imami literature would seek to justify this fact by invoking a form of *taqiyya* practised by ʿAlī, who feared being accused of deviation from the path followed by Abū Bakr and ʿUmar.[19] This striking rejection of ʿAlī's *sunna* is thus

p. 652. For a very rare usage of the expression *dīn ʿUthmān* (coined probably in reaction to the expression *dīn ʿAlī*), see J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*, I-VI, Berlin, 1991-1997, see index under '*dīn*' and also vol. 4, pp. 565 sq. (on use of the term *dīn*).

13   Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol. 4/b, ed. M. Schloessinger, Jerusalem, 1961, p. 27; al-Ṭabarī, ed. de Goeje, vol. 1, pp. 3350-3351.

14   Cf. *Naqāʾiḍ Jarīr wa l-Farazdaq*, ed. A.A. Bevan, Leiden, 1905-1909, p. 1013.

15   Ibn Abī Yaʿlā al-Farrāʾ, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, Damascus, 1923; rpr. Beirut, ca. 1980, vol. 2, p. 32. Some reports make a distinction between the *sunna* of the Prophet and the *sīra* of the caliphs (cf. al-Ṭabarī, ed. de Goeje, 1, pp. 2786 and p. 2793; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, ed. M.Th. Houtsma, Leiden, 1883, vol. 2, pp. 186-187). Bravmann believes that in this context these two terms are synonymous, *The Spiritual Background*, pp. 124sq. For an historical and doctrinal analysis of these passages, see T. Nagel, *Studien zum Minderheitenproblem im Islam*, vol. 1, Bonn, 1973, pp. 7-44.

16   Ed. Dūrī-Muṭṭalibī, Beirut, 1971, p. 284.

17   Cf. M. Sharon, 'The ʿAbbasid Daʿwa Re-examined on the Basis of a New Source', *Arabic and Islamic Studies*, Bar-Ilan University, 1973. In this regard, refer also to the important work by M.Q. Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early ʿAbbāsids*, Leiden, 1997, see index under '*akhbār*'.

18   Now see W. Madelung, "Abdallāh b. ʿAbbās and Shiite Law', in U. Vermeulen and J.M.F. van Reeth (eds), *Law, Christianity and Modernism in Islamic Society*, Louvain, 1998, pp. 13-25.

19   According to a tradition going back to imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir recorded by Ibn Shabba, *Taʾrīkh al-madīna al-munawwara*, ed. M.F. Shaltūt, Qumm, 1410/1989-1990, p. 217; cited by Madelung, "Abdallāh b. ʿAbbās and Shiite Law', p. 24.

perhaps due to the fact that, in speaking of the latter, the term *dīn* was more frequently used, as it stresses the radical difference of some of his positions on the faith from those of his predecessors. The *muḥaddith* Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd b. Abī Umayya (d. 204/819), a fierce opponent of the Kufan Shiʿis, never ceased to vaunt the merits of the first three *rāshidūn*, exhorting his public to follow their *sunna*, by doubtless deliberately omitting ʿAlī from the list of role models to be followed.[20] It is surely as a reaction against the use of the expression *dīn ʿAlī*, that, writing at the turn of the fifth and sixth/eleventh and twelfth centuries, Ibn Abī Yaʿlā declares that the *sunna* of the first three caliphs – ʿAlī is thus deliberately excluded – was called 'the original ancient religion', *al-dīn al-ʿatīq*.[21] *Dīn ʿAlī* would thus have been much more than a *sunna*, more than a collection of behavioural patterns or decisions about daily sacred or secular life. Rather, it seems to point to a whole set of beliefs, professions of faith one might say, touching upon both the sacred and profane, the spiritual as well as the temporal – hence justifying the translation of the *dīn ʿAlī* as 'religion of ʿAlī'. Let us try to define the content of this 'religion', at least in its broadest terms.

Could it have meant "the religion" proclaimed by Muḥammad, for which ʿAlī was the Messiah, the Saviour of the End of Times? (see chap. 2). Yes, given that some of his followers would have believed this. But the sources that refer to this messianic belief in the figure of ʿAlī do not seem to refer to it as *dīn ʿAlī*. Better to follow lines of research where textual evidence is both abundant and concordant.

In his outstanding work *The Succession to Muḥammad*, W. Madelung examines in turn almost all the passages listed above where the expression appears.[22] An impressive work of erudition and subtle analysis, it addresses many fundamental issues in the history of early Islam; which might explain why its eminent author makes only one allusion to *dīn ʿAlī*: "*Dīn ʿAlī* could at this stage have only a limited meaning, most likely the claim that ʿAlī was the best of men after Muḥammad, his legatee (*waṣī*), and as such most entitled to lead the Community."[23]

20   Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 12 vols, Hyderabad, 1907-1909; rpr. Beirut, 1968, vol. 9, pp. 328 sq. See also a similar opinion held by al-Shāfiʿī, analysed by J. Schacht, *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, Oxford, 1950, p. 24. Including ʿAlī among the *rāshidūn* caliphs posed a problem until the ʿAbbasid period. Ibn Ḥanbal would have been the first great non-Alid thinker to have sought to employ the image of ʿAlī to this end; see his *Kitāb al-sunna*, Mecca, 1349/1930, p. 214; Ṣāliḥ b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Sīrat al-imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, ed. F. ʿAbd al-Munʿim Aḥmad, Alexandria, 1981, p. 82. Regarding the rehabilitation of ʿAlī, see also T. Nagel, *Rechtleitung und Kalifat*, Bonn, 1975, pp. 232 sq.

21   Ibn Abī Yaʿlā al-Farrāʾ, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, vol. 2, p. 32 (let us state here that ʿAtīq is also one of the surnames of Abū Bakr).

22   In the course of the very long chapter on ʿAlī's reign, see W. Madelung, *The succession of Muḥammad*, pp. 178-179, and in the conclusion mainly devoted to Muʿāwiya's rule, p. 338.

23   Madelung, *The Succession*, pp. 178-179.

As we shall see, "the best of men after Muḥammad, his legatee (*waṣī*), and as such most entitled to lead the Community" would be the literal embodiment of "ʿAlī's religion'; however, each of these terms contains within it numerous implicit conceptions – about both ancestral Arab beliefs and the new Islamic faith – which might justify the case for his exclusive legitimacy in the eyes of a number of believers. The meaning of *dīn ʿAlī* is perhaps limited in scope, but is nevertheless complex. The aim of this chapter is to explore the how and the why of its meaning and hopefully make a modest contribution to the work of the renowned Oxford scholar.

3   Themes Concerning ʿAlī and the Alids

The first and best field of enquiry is the sayings of ʿAlī himself. They are notoriously numerous and, authentic or not, fill many pages in a variety of literary genres.[24] ʿAlī's life as it appears in the sources, and despite many contradictions and improbabilities, seems to have been especially active: his youth just at the birth of Islam; his relationship with Muḥammad, first in Mecca and then Medina; his exploits in war, his spiritual dimension, his family; his exclusion from the succession to the Prophet; his relationship with the first three caliphs; his short-lived reign – a period of uninterrupted civil war.... The complexity and drama of his life are reflected in the richness and variety of the sayings of the most striking figure that the Islamic sources reveal to us.

Nevertheless, numerous and various as his sayings might be, there are two dominant and recurrent themes: that of his being the first to accept Muḥammad's prophetic message and to have sworn himself to absolute faith in and loyalty to the new religion (the concept of *sābiqa*); and, more crucial still, the fact of being the Prophet's closest male relative with the strongest blood ties to him (the notion of *qarāba*). As we shall see, the importance of this relationship is so fundamental that it encompasses and even explains the idea of *sābiqa*.[25] Implicitly or explicitly, these two realities made of ʿAlī, in his own eyes and in those of his supporters, the only legitimate successor to the Prophet. A glance through the texts, for example the sayings of ʿAlī about the government of the community – in which his legitimist claims feature – will suffice to identify his two omnipresent concerns: example giving (of these sayings), his letters to Muʿāwiya in the context of the battle of Ṣiffīn;[26] his letters to

24   Cf. L. Veccia Vaglieri, 'Sul Nahj al-balāghah e sul suo compilatore ash-Sharīf ar-Raḍī', *AIUON*, special issue (1958), pp. 7 sqq.

25   Neither of these themes, which we shall examine in detail, are in contradiction with the figure of ʿAlī as Messiah. The subject deserves an entire separate study.

26   Al-Minqarī, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, ed. ʿA.M. Hārūn, Cairo 1382/1962, pp. 470; al-Thaqafī, *Kitāb al-ghārāt*, ed. J. al-Muḥaddith al-Urmawī, Tehran, 1395/1975, pp. 303 sq.; al-Masʿūdī,

his elder brother ʿAqīl b. Abī Ṭālib in the same context,[27] or again, his pronounce-
ments after the celebrated speech by Muḥammad at Ghadīr Khumm.[28]

These are the very themes by which the supporters of ʿAlī recognised him
as the sole legitimate *waṣī* (legatee) of Muḥammad. In the poem recorded by
al-Balādhurī of the warrior of the Banū ʿAdī, who fought on the side of ʿĀʾisha,
Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr and against ʿAlī at the battle of the Camel, this title of
ʿAlī's was an object of ridicule (a point which goes to prove the fact of its exis-
tence), since for the Banū ʿAdī, the only true 'legatee' of the Prophet is Abū
Bakr, whose daughter was present at the battle against the Alids: We are ʿAdī
and we are looking for ʿAlī (to kill him) ... we will kill all those who oppose the
waṣī [i.e. Abū Bakr].[29]

Al-Ṭabarī reports that, after the assassination of the third caliph ʿUthmān,
poets competed to commemorate the event. Among them, al-Faḍl b. al-ʿAbbās
b. ʿUtba b. Abī Lahab seized the opportunity to sing the praises of ʿAlī:
Truly, among those who recall (*ʿinda dhī l-dhikri*), the best among men after
Muḥammad is indeed the legatee of the Chosen Prophet / He who, as the first,
the closest (*ṣinw* or *ṣunw*) to the Prophet recited the Prayer and who, as the
first, defeated the misguided of Badr.[30]

In a letter probably written just before Ṣiffīn and which was recorded by some
of the historiographers and censored by others, Muḥammad, son of the first
caliph, Abū Bakr, violently opposed Muʿāwiya. Referring to ʿAlī, he described
him as the first man to have responded positively to the Message of Muḥammad,
to whom he was related as brother and cousin, of whom he was the legatee,
who was the leader of the faithful and the father of his (Muḥammad's) male
descendants.[31]

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          Murūj al-dhahab, ed. Barbier de Meynard, rev. C. Pellat, Beirut, 1968-1979, vol. 3, p. 201 sq.;
          (Pseudo-) Ibn Qutayba, *al-Imāma wa l-siyāsa*, ed. M.M. al-Rāfiʿī, Cairo, 1322/1904, vol. 1,
          pp. 191 sq. Also, Madelung, *The Succession*, pp. 240-241 and pp. 270-271.

27   Al-Thaqafī, *K. al-ghārāt*, pp. 434-435; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol. 2, ed. M.B.
          al-Maḥmūdī, Beirut, 1974, pp. 74-75. Also, H. Lammens, *Etudes sur le règne du Calife
          Omaiyade Muʿāwia 1er*, Paris, 1908, p. 175; Madelung, *The Succession*, pp. 263-264.

28   E.g. al-Ṭabarī, De Goeje, vol. 1, pp. 3350 sq.; on Ghadīr Khumm, see e.g. A.J. Wensinck,
          Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane, Leiden, 1936, see under *walī*. Also,
          L. Veccia Vaglieri, *EI2*, s.v.; Amir-Moezzi, *EI Three*.

29   Al-Balādhurī, *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 245-246.

30   Al-Ṭabarī, ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 4, p. 426; the term *ṣinw/ṣunw*, which I have translated as 'the
          closest', literally means 'similar, same' and means the brother, cousin or son. W. Madelung
          quotes the poem in the edition by de Goeje, vol. 1, p. 3065, and attributes it instead to the
          father of al-Faḍl, al-ʿAbbās b. ʿUtba, who seems to have been the poet and spokesman for the
          Banū Hāshim; *The Succession*, p. 186. Ibn Ḥanbal uses the term to define al-ʿAbbās's relation-
          ship to ʿAbd Allāh, Muḥammad's father; see his *Musnad*, vol. 1, p. 207 and vol. 2, p. 322.

31   Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol. 2, pp. 393 sq.; al-Minqarī, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, pp. 118 sq.;
          al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, pp. 197 sq. Al-Ṭabarī expressly admits to having censored the

In one of his *ṭawīl*s, the Alid poet of Baṣra, Abū l-Aswad al-Duʾalī (d. 69/688), mentioning his favorites among the immediate blood relations of the Prophet, limits himself to naming ʿAlī by the single term *waṣī*.[32] The same leitmotifs are found in the sermon which al-Ḥasan, ʿAlī's eldest son, preached at the mosque in Kūfa after his father's assassination; a sermon also recorded by the Sunni al-Balādhurī and the pro-Shiʿi Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/966).[33] Shiʿi sources, particularly in the *ḥadīth*, later took up the same themes to the full and embellished the refrains of the *sābiqa* and, even more so, the *qarāba* of ʿAlī.

4   The Basis of the Religion of ʿAlī

In what way do these ideas justify the expression 'religion of ʿAlī'? How and why might they constitute articles of faith? If ʿAlī and his followers laid claim to them in such an obsessive manner and if, besides, both those who were for these ideas and those who were against them were all in the habit of referring to them as *dīn ʿAlī*, it is because they must have been based upon some doctrinal and ideological ideas that seemed legitimate from a religious point of view and credible to those who professed them. I will argue that two categories of 'legitimising proofs' sustained these ideas and justified the Alids in applying the term *dīn ʿAlī* to them: 'proofs' of an Islamic nature based on the Quran and even more so, 'proofs' based on ancestral beliefs.

4.1   *The Quranic Basis*
Famous for his legendary knowledge of and scrupulous faithfulness to the text of the Quran,[34] ʿAlī could not have failed to use elements of the revealed text to legitimise his claims. Here too, Madelung's scholarship will guide us.[35] In a sub-section of his dense introduction to *The Succession to Muḥammad*, he

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letter because the masses (*ʿāmma*) would not have tolerated it; ed. De Goeje, vol. 1, p. 3248. By this he surely means the Ḥanbalī activists of Baghdad whose hostility towards the great scholar was known to all; cf. al-Iṣfahānī, *Annalium Libri*, ed. Gottwald, Petropoli, 1884, vol. 2, p. 155; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, Hyderabad, 1357/1938, vol. 6, p. 172.

32   *Dīwān Abū l-Aswad al-Duʾalī*, ed. M.Ḥ. Āl Yāsīn, Beirut, 1974, pp. 119-120; Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, 20 vols, Būlāq, 1285/1868, vol. 12, p. 321 (a shorter version of the poem).

33   *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol. 3, ed. M.B. al-Maḥmudī, Beirut, 1974, p. 28; Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*, ed. S.A. Ṣaqr, Cairo 1949; rpr., Qumm, 1416/1995, p. 62.

34   See e.g. Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, 9 vols, Beirut, 1380/1960, vol. 2, p. 338; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, vol. 7, p. 338; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāya fī gharīb al-ḥadīth wa l-athar*, ed. al-Zāwī and al-Tināḥī, 4 vols, Cairo, 1963-1966; rpr. Beirut, n.d., vol. 3, p. 102; here, chapter 1.

35   In this study I am relying on the official version of the Quran. In other words, the Shiʿi material on the falsification of the Quran is not considered here.

assiduously examines all the Quranic texts that might serve to justify the Alid claim to lead the Community after the Prophet's death. To my knowledge, this is the first time the evidence has been brought forward with such erudition and precision; it provides a focus for, and indeed the fundamental argument of, the thesis which underpins the entire work.[36] In summarising it, we will therefore mainly confine ourselves to a consideration of the Quranic proofs.

The Quran places great emphasis on respect for family and blood ties:

> Surely God bids to justice and good-doing and giving to kinsmen (*dhī l-qurbā*); and He forbids indecency, dishonour, and insolence, admonishing you, so that haply you will remember.
>
> Q 16:90

| | | Quṣayy | |
| | | ʿAbd Manāf | |

ʿAbd Shams	Nawfal	Hāshim	al-Muṭṭalib
Umayya			
Ḥarb		ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib	
Abū Sufyān	ʿAbbās	ʿAbd Allāh	Abū Ṭālib
Muʿāwiya		Muḥammad	ʿAlī
		Fāṭima	
			al-Ḥasan
			and al-Ḥusayn
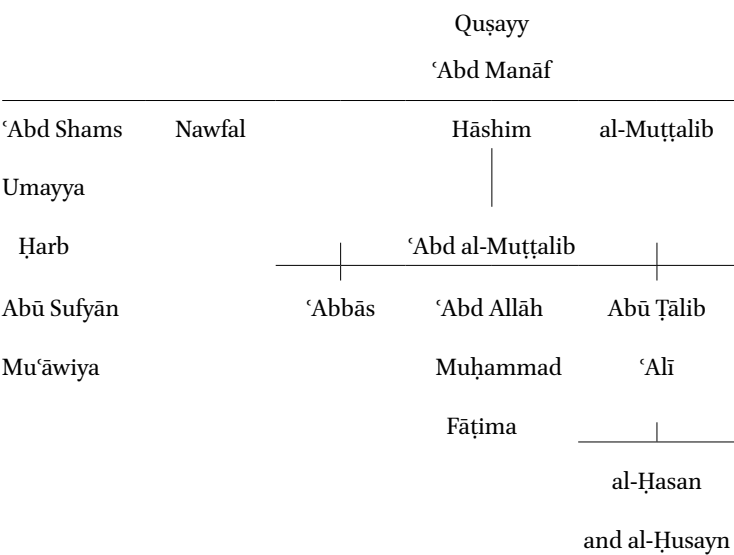
Genealogical Table of Muḥammad, ʿAlī and Omayyads

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36   W. Madelung, *The Succession*, 'The obligations of the kinship and the families of the prophets in the Qurʾān', pp. 6-18; whence the reaction of certain critics of the book who perceive it as a kind of pro-Shiʿi apologia. This is certainly a flagrant misunderstanding; but further analysis is beyond the scope of the present study.

> And give the kinsman his right.
>
> > Q 17:26

> They will question thee concerning what they should expend. Say: 'What-soever good you expend is for parents (*wālidayn*) and kinsmen (*aqrabīn*), orphans, the needy, and the traveller.'
>
> > Q 2:215

Generosity to close relatives and providing them with material support is a religious duty, but on condition that they are converts to Islam; although even if they are not, the Muslim is called upon to be just and impartial to those of his relatives who may have retained their pagan beliefs (Q 4:135; 6:152; 9:23-24 and 113-114).[37] However, in spite of these reserves, the Quran clearly establishes the superiority and preeminence of blood ties over all other bonds or alliances.

> Those who are bound by blood (*ūlu l-arḥām*) are nearer to one another in the Book of God than the believers and the emigrants.
>
> > Q 33:6

Verses 72 to 74 of Sura 8, which sing the praises of the early converts, the Emigrants and the Helpers, are followed by the following verse (probably a later addition):

> And those who have believed afterwards and emigrated, and struggled with you – they belong to you; but those related by blood are nearer to one another in the Book of God.[38]

There is yet another important contributory factor for our subject: in the Quranic 'History of Prophets', close relatives of the prophets play a vital role: they are the protectors of the Messengers of God against their adversaries and, after the Messengers die, they become their inheritors in both temporal and spiritual matters. The prophets of the Banū Isrāʾīl are in fact descendants of one and the same family going back to Noah and to Adam; the line of this same family continues down to Jesus (Q 3:33-34 and 19:58). The chain of prophets and the importance of their inheritors, chosen from among their immediate family, in the economy of the sacred, as, are stressed by verses 84 to 89 of Sura 6:

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37   W. Madelung, *The Succession*, pp. 6-7.
38   *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

And we gave to him [i.e. Abraham] Isaac and Jacob – each one We guided,
And Noah We guided before; and of his seed David and Solomon, Job and
Joseph, Moses and Aaron – even so We recompense the good-doers –
Zachariah and John, Jesus and Elias; each was of the righteous; Ishmael
and Elisha, Jonah and Lot – each one We preferred above all beings; and
of their fathers, and of their seed, and of their brethren; and We elected
them, and We guided them to a straight path. That is God's guidance;
He guides by it whom He will of His servants; had they been idolaters, it
would have failed them, the things they did. Those are they to whom We
gave the Book, the Judgement, the Prophethood.

All Noah's people were destroyed in the Flood, except for his family (*ahl*), with
the exception of one son and his wife, who had betrayed him (Q 9:40 and
45-46; 21:76-77; 23:27; 37:76-77). Similarly, Lot's relatives, except for his wife –
also a traitor – were the only ones spared in the destruction visited upon the
people (Q 54:33-35; 66:10), since his family was composed of those who had
'purified themselves' (*yataṭahharūn*) (Q 27:56). Abraham, a central figure in
the Quran, is the patriarch of the prophets of the Banū Isrāʾīl. All the prophets
and other vehicles of the Scriptures after him are in fact his direct descendants
through his sons Isaac and Ishmael and thus form an uninterrupted chain of
Messengers and Guides (*imām*s). (Q 2:124; 19:49-50; 29:27; 57:26). Addressing
Sarah on the subject of Abraham's family, the angels say:

What, dost thou marvel at God's command? The mercy of God and His
blessings be upon you, O Family of the Home (*Ahl al-bayt*) (in the mas-
culine plural)?
        Q 11:76[39]

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[39]   'Family of the Home' seems to me to be a more precise translation of this expres-
        sion than the more conventional 'People of the House'. *Ahl* in Arabic, both in South
        Arabian as well as in Ugaritic, corresponds to the Accadian origin *ālu* (W. von Soden,
        Akkadisches Handwörterbuch, Wiesbaden, 1965, *s.v.*) and to the Hebrew *ohêl*. The lat-
        ter means the nomad's tent (e.g. Genesis 13:5; 18:1; Isaiah 38:12) or the tent as sanctuary
        (Exodus 33:7; Numbers 11:24) and as Residence/Home (*mishkan*) of God (Psalms 15:1; 27:5)
        (cf. Gesenius-Buhl, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch* [17th ed, Leiden, 1951],
        p. 95, col. 2). *Ahl*, place of residence, home, eventually came to designate those who live
        there, hence the family; it is the same term which, according to the *Tāj al-ʿarūs*, gave us the
        term *āl* (family, descendants), with the letter *h* alleviated: *āl wa aṣluhu ahl ubdilat al-hāʾ
        hamza fa ṣārat a-a-l-tawālat hamzatān fa ubdilat al-thāniya alifan fa ṣāra āl* (al-Zabīdī, *Tāj
        al-ʿarūs*, under *āl*). As for the term *bayt*, whether it refers to a building, a tent or a natural
        site, it also means a place of residence; 'home' means this. I shall return to other semantic
        levels related to *bayt*.

Moreover:

> Yet We gave the people of Abraham the Book and the Wisdom, and We gave them a mighty kingdom (*mulkan ʿaẓīman*).
>   Q 4:54

Moses is assisted in his prophetic mission by his brother Aaron who shares with him an intimate relationship with God (Q 20:29-32 and 36; 21:48-49; 25:35). The enigmatic *baqiyya*, a relic containing the divine *sakīna* and signs of the divine investiture and of the royal rank of the Banū Isrāʾīl, belongs to the family of the chosen brothers (Q 2:248). Similarly, David has Solomon, his son, inheritor and successor, as his assistant (Q 21:78; 27:16; 38:30). Zachariah, John the Baptist's father, asks God for a divine son who will inherit the gift of prophecy, hereditary in Jacob's family (Q 19:5-6). As for non-Israelite prophets, in this instance Shuʿayb from the people of Midian and Ṣāliḥ from the Thamūd, their families also play a vital role as protectors and disciples (Q 11:91 and 27:49).[40]

This eminent place accorded to close relatives of preceding prophets could not be without any parallel with Muḥammad's immediate family. Some Quranic passages are vague and indirect (Q 26:214, '*ashīrataka al-aqrabīn*'; Q 42:23, '*al-mawadda fī l-qurbā*'). Others certainly do refer to the family and the consanguine relatives of the Prophet. These are the verses relating to the distribution of a fifth of the spoils (*khums*) and a part of the *fayʾ*, the property of infidels acquired without battle, to close relatives (*dhū l-qurbā*) of the Prophet (Q 8:41 and 59:7). As to the 'close relatives', practically all the interpretive and historiographical sources are in agreement in recognising the descendants of the brothers Hāshim and al-Muṭṭalib, the sons of Muḥammad's great grandfather, ʿAbd Manāf, to the exclusion of another two of his sons, namely ʿAbd Shams and Nawfal. According to many documents, these advantages compensated somewhat for the fact that Muḥammad's immediate relatives could receive no alms or charity (*ṣadaqa, zakāt*). The reason given for this is that charity issued from people's 'impurities' (*awsākh*), whence the purifying effect of practising charity. The virtue of purity associated with the Prophet's family was thus considered incompatible with receiving charity. The Quran also refers to the purity of Muḥammad's family, just as it refers to that of Lot's family (see above).

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40   Madelung, *The Succession*, pp. 8-12. For discussions of the term *baqiyya*, cf. R. Paret, 'Die Bedeutung des Wortes *baqīya* im Koran', in *Alttestamentliche Studien Friedrich Nötscher zum 60. Geburtstag*, Bonn, 1950, pp. 168-171; A. Spitaler, 'Was bedeutet *baqīja* im Koran?', in *Westöstliche Abhandlungen Rudolf Tschudi zum 70. Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden, 1954, pp. 137-146.

O Ahl al-Bayt, God only desires to put away from you abomination and to
cleanse you.

> Q 33:33

The spiritual and religious importance of Muḥammad's family is also noted
in the famous verse of the Ordeal, *āyat al-mubāhala* (Q 3:61). Just as the
Quran constantly establishes parallels between Muḥammad and previous
prophets, for instance his prophetic mission, the fierce resistance of his peo-
ple and, finally, his victory thanks to God's support, so the similar status of
Muḥammad's family and the families of past prophets and their spiritual and
worldy heritage seems obvious. Admittedly, according to the later dogma of
the 'seal of prophecy' Muḥammad's inheritor could not lay claim to the gift
of prophecy (see however here chap. 7), but it is just as true that among the
gifts of the prophetic heritage bequeathed by the Envoys of God to their close
relatives, the Quran includes sovereignty (*mulk*), authority (*ḥukm*), wisdom
(*ḥikma*), Scriptures (*kitāb*) and the imamate. Given this Quranic evidence, it
would appear that W. Madelung is right to conclude that the Quran advises
consultation (*shūrā*) about the leadership in certain cases, but never on mat-
ters concerning the succession of prophets.[41]

I will be returning to many of these points. Here I would like to note that,
given his privileged relationship with the Prophet, ʿAlī would surely not have
neglected any opportunity to point to this Quranic evidence in support of his
own declarations. In his *Ṭabaqāt*, Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845), an author who could
hardly be suspected of pro-Alid sympathies, tells a story which seems espe-
cially significant. In a chapter devoted to 'the heritage of the Messenger of God
and what he left behind' (*dhikr mīrāth rasūli llāh wa mā taraka*), he records
that, according to ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Maʿbad, (grandson of al-ʿAbbās b.
ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib), Fāṭima and al-ʿAbbās, accompanied by ʿAlī, approached the
elected caliph, Abū Bakr, to ask him for their rightful share of Muḥammad's
heritage. Abū Bakr is said to have replied:

> The Messenger of God said: "We [the prophets] do not leave an inheri-
> tance; all that we leave behind is charity." And I am now entrusted with
> all that the Messenger of God left behind.

Quoting the Quran, ʿAlī is said to have replied:

> Solomon inherited from David (Q 27:16) and [calling on God to ask Him
> for a son] Zachariah says: "So give me, from Thee, a kinsman who shall be
> my inheritor of the House of Jacob." (Q 19:6)

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41   W. Madelung, *The Succession*, pp. 12–18.

Abū Bakr: 'By God, surely you know what I know.'

ʿAlī: 'It is the Book of God that speaks here.' After this there was silence and then they parted.[42]

His legitimization by the Quran was certainly of importance in the support which (according to the historiographers) the majority of the Quran reciters (*qurrāʾ*) gave to ʿAlī at the time of his conflict with Muʿāwiya, especially before the beginning of the battle of Ṣiffīn and in the ensuing arbitration.[43] However, in this early period of Islam, legitimization by the Quran was assuredly no guarantee of unanimity. The new religion would require several generations of assimilation to profoundly influence the outlook of the people and to establish itself in their hearts with sufficient authority to shape their minds. To be credible during this early period, a speech or an event had to be rooted in ancient, ancestral beliefs and to have antecedents in Arabic tribal culture, if it were to resonate among recent converts to Islam. We have already discussed the influence of Biblical writings on the society which saw the birth of Muḥammad and his message (see above chap. 2). Next we will consider other factors of this milieu.

4.2   *The Pre-Islamic Basis*

For more than a century, a number of eminent Orientalists and specialists in Arabic and Islamic studies have studied and progressively revealed the remarkable continuity between the pre-Islamic period and the earliest days of Islam in questions of institutions, beliefs and rituals. These scholars include J. Wellhausen and I. Goldziher and the circle responsible for 'From Jāhiliyya to Islam' around M.J. Kister and his colleagues and students, M. Lecker, U. Rubin, H. Busse and others, not forgetting J. Henninger, R.B. Serjeant, T. Fahd, A.F.L. Beeston, J. Chelhod and, more recently, E. Conte and C.J. Robin. Many of these have been motivated to study the system of family relationships in both in its secular and sacred, in other words its natural and supernatural aspects.

The old thesis of H. Lammens, in his *Le berceau de l'Islam*, according to which hereditary power and dynastic rulers were completely unknown to, if not utterly detested by, the Arabs, would appear to be no longer tenable.[44] Ever

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42   Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 315. I. Hrbek, stressing amongst other things the incompatibility of the *ḥadīth* quoted by Abū Bakr with the spirit and letter of the Qurʾān, considers it apocryphal, 'Muḥammads Nachlass und die Aliden', *Archiv Orientální*, 18 (1950), pp. 143-149; Madelung, *The Succession*, pp. 360-361. On the spoliation of the inheritance of Fāṭima by the caliphal authorities, see Sulaym b. Qays (attributed to), *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*, ed. al-Anṣārī al-Zanjānī, 3 vols., Qumm, 1426/1995, chap. 14 (on this work, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 1).

43   Cf. Minqarī, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, pp. 88ff.; al-Ṭabarī, ed. De Goeje, vol. 1, pp. 3385-3386.

44   H. Lammens, *Le berceau de l'Islam: l'Arabie occidentale à la veille de l'Hégire*, Rome, 1914, p. 314 and *passim*.

since the monumental study by E. Tyan, *Institutions du droit public Musulman*, it has been agreed that, although tribal secular leadership was not in fact always hereditary, religious leadership and priestly functions were always the prerogative of a significant noble lineage, *nasab*, and that this was particularly true of the tribe of Quraysh.[45] Even W.M. Watt, who in his biography of Muḥammad seems at times to be close to Lammens view,[46] concedes, in his *Islamic Political Thought*, that the Arabs regularly elected their leaders from particular families.[47] In this regard, the studies by R.B. Serjeant seem decisive. In a series of publications, he most convincingly shows that Muḥammad's rapid success, and the ease with which he rallied many tribes to his cause, were due essentially to the fact that he belonged to an aristocratic and theocratic Meccan and Qurayshī family in which religious functions were hereditary, as was indeed the case throughout Arabia. Had he been not a member of this lineage, which the English scholar terms 'The Holy Family', Muḥammad would have had no credibility with other tribes.[48]

Well before Muḥammad's time, the tribe of the Quraysh were held to be under divine protection, thanks to its sacred status as one of the *ahl al-ḥaram*, the People of the Meccan Sanctuary and the area surrounding it. According to U. Rubin, even early Muslim exegesis contained traces of this ancient belief.[49] Muḥammad's ancestor Quṣayy seems to have been the chief guardian of the sanctuary; from him onwards, the different clans of his direct descendants inherited various responsibilities for the ritual functions of the pilgrimage: guarding the Kaʿba (*ḥijāba*), providing drinking water (*siqāya*), food (*rifāda*) and banners (*liwāʾ*) as well as the privilege of *nadwa*, a term vaguely designating either the council of tribal leadership or the meeting place for the resolution of inter-tribal differences.[50] We find traces of the hereditary priestly functions of Muḥammad's ancestors in the poetry of the Prophet's bard, Ḥassān b. Thābit (d. 54/674).[51] Muḥammad himself is said to have declared the 'Holy Family' of the Quraysh to consist of the descendants of al-Muṭṭalib and those of his

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45   E. Tyan, *Institutions du droit public Musulman*, Paris, 1954-1956, vol. 1, pp. 97 sq., 114 sqq.

46   W.M. Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford, 1961, esp. pp. 35-36.

47   Id., *Islamic Political Thought*, Edinburgh, 1968, p. 31.

48   R.B. Serjeant, 'The Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt', *An Inaugural Lecture at the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 1956 (London, 1957), pp. 3-29; id., '*Ḥaram* and *ḥawṭah*, the Sacred Enclave in Arabia', pp. 41-58; id., 'The "Constitution" of Medina', pp. 3-16; id. 'The *Sunnah Jāmiʿah*, Pacts with the Yathrib Jews, and the *taḥrīm* of Yathrib: Analysis and Translation of the Documents Comprised in the So-called "Constitution of Medina"', BSOAS, 41 (1978), pp. 1-42 (rpr. in *Studies in Arabian History and Civilisation*, articles VIII, III, v and VI).

49   U. Rubin, 'The *īlāf* of Quraysh. A Study of Sūra CVI', *Arabica*, 31-32 (1984), pp. 165-188.

50   R.B. Serjeant, '*Ḥaram* and *ḥawṭah*', pp. 53 sq.; U. Rubin, 'The Kaʿba: Aspects of Its Ritual Functions and Position in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic times', JSAI, 8 (1986), pp. 97-131.

51   Ḥassān ibn Thābit, *Dīwan*, ed. W.N. ʿArafat, London, 1971, vol. 1, p. 109.

brother, Hāshim, the great grandfather of the Prophet (see the genealogical tree above). The canonical works of *ḥadīth* leave no doubt about this by identifying the 'near kin' (*dhū l-qurbā*) mentioned by the Quran as those that receive the *khums* and *fayʾ*; the receipt of alms is forbidden to them as descendants of al-Muṭṭalib and even more often of Hāshim.[52] Moreover, we know that since pre-Islamic times the Banū l-Muṭṭalib and the Banū Hāshim were strongly bound to each other by the *ḥilf al-fuḍūl*.[53]

In this connection, the tradition recorded by Abū Dāwūd and al-Maqrīzī, on the authority of al-Zuhrī, Saʿīd b. al-Musayyib and Jubayr b. Muṭʿim, is of great importance: after the victory at Khaybar, the Prophet divided the share of the close relatives (*sahm dhī l-qurbā*) between the Banū Hāshim and the Banū l-Muṭṭalib, thus excluding the Banū Nawfal and the Banū ʿAbd Shams (Nawfal and ʿAbd Shams were two other brothers of Muṭṭalib and Hāshim). So, the reporter Jubayr b. Muṭʿim (a descendant of Nawfal), and ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (the future third caliph, descendant of ʿAbd Shams) protested to Muḥammad saying:

> Messenger of God, because of the place God has given you amongst them, we do not deny the excellence of the Banū Hāshim. But what of our brothers, the Banū l-Muṭṭalib? You have given them (the former) a share and you have excluded us, when our relationship to you is the same as theirs.

Muḥammad replied:

> We [the Banū Hāshim] and the Banū l-Muṭṭalib have never been separated, neither during the *Jāhiliyya* nor in Islam. We and they are one and the same.[54]

The saintliness of the Banū Hāshim is evidenced by the subtle analyses of the *Hāshimiyyāt*, a collection of poems by al-Kumayt b. Zayd al-Asadī al-Kūfī

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52 Cf. A.J. Wensinck, *Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition*, Leiden, 1927, p. 266. On the part reserved for the Banū Hāshim in the *dīwān* by ʿUmar see Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 3, pp. 294 sq., completed in al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, Leiden, 1866, pp. 448 sq. On *ʿaṭāʾ* reserved for the Banū Hāshim see al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, *Jamharat nasab Quraysh*, ed. M.M. Shākir, Cairo, 1381/1961, p. 111. For an exclusively ʿAbbasid appropriation of these facts, see Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-kharāj*, ed. I. ʿAbbās, Beirut and London, 1985, pp. 102-104, 142 sq.

53 W.M. Watt, *Muḥammad at Mecca*, Oxford, 1953, pp. 6-7; C. Pellat, 'Ḥilf al-fuḍūl', *EI2*.

54 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, ed. M.M. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, 4 vols, Cairo, n.d., ch. 19, no. 51; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Nizāʿ wa l-takhāṣum fī mā bayna banī Umayya wa banī Hāshim*, ed. Ḥ. Muʾnis, Cairo, 1984, p. 60 (a slightly different and shorter version).

(d. 126/743),[55] in studies by T. Nagel, M. Sharon and especially W. Madelung in his monograph dedicated to it.[56] It seems that, among the descendants of Hāshim, Muḥammad considered his own family to be *the* 'Holy Family' above all others.[57] Muḥammad is said have described this 'Holy Family' by the expression *ahl baytī*, having certainly in mind the Quranic occurrences of the expression *ahl al-bayt* which we have examined above. Furthermore, in addition to the purity which the Quran ascribes to Muḥammad's *ahl al-bayt* (Q 33:33), the sacred dimension of the term *bayt* must certainly have also had been a significant role. Indeed, the religious nature of the term, originating from the antique heritage of Semitic languages in which it means temple, sanctuary or the place of residence of a supernatural being, is again clearly evident from the ways in which the Quran employs the term; for example, in the fact that it describes the Kaʿba, or in the expression *al-bayt al-maʿmūr* and in the expression *rabb al-bayt* in the early suras, 105, *al-Fīl* and 106, *Quraysh*.[58] It is not my purpose here

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55   Ed. J. Horovitz, *Die Hāšimijjāt des Kumait*, Leiden, 1904; Arabic text reprinted in Qumm, n.d.(ca. 1970).

56   T. Nagel, *Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des abbasidischen Kalifats*, Bonn, 1972, pp. 70. and 79 sq.; M. Sharon, *Black Banners from the East*, Leiden and Jerusalem, 1983, pp. 76 sq.; W. Madelung, 'The Hāshimiyyāt of al-Kumayt and Hāshimi Shiʿism', *SI*, 70 (1990), pp. 5-26.

57   In this context, for reasons of methodology, traditions concerning 'monotheism', signs of election and the saintliness of the ancestors and close relatives of the Prophet, specifically his grandfather ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, his father ʿAbd Allāh and his paternal uncle Abū Ṭālib (ʿAlī's father who adopted and raised Muḥammad after the death of ʿAbd Allāh) cannot be exploited here because of their strongly Islamic connotations, which, in turn, prove their later date. On these traditions and the historical problems they pose, see e.g. T. Fahd, *La divination arabe*, Strasbourg, 1971; 2nd edn, Paris, 1987, pp. 82 sq. and pp. 260 sq.; U. Rubin, 'Prophets and Progenitors in Early Shīʿa Tradition', *JSAI*, 1 (1979); C. Gilliot, 'Muqātil, grand exégète, traditionniste et théologien maudit', *JA*, 279/1-2 (1991), pp. 68-70; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 103-104 and note 204; J. Chabbi, *Le Seigneur des tribus*, pp. 166 sq. It seems however undeniable that the native environment of Muḥammad was deeply permeated by biblical culture, as we have seen (chap. 2). Even the notion of the sainthood of the family of the saint is fundamentally biblical.

58   In Accadian, the term *bīt* designates the temple as a whole, or the rooms of which it is made up (W. von Soden, *AHW*, *s.v.*); the same evolution is encountered in Hebrew, as well as in Syriac and Arabic. In parallel with its profane, or secular, meaning of 'residence', the religious nature of the term is more specifically emphasised when it is preceded by an article such as *ha-b-baït* in Hebrew (Micah 3:12; Haggai 1:8) (Gesenius-Buhl, *Hebräisches*, pp. 95-98) or *al-bayt* in Arabic (e.g. Q 2:125, 127 etc.). Apparently, during the nomadic period, among the Arabs as well as the Hebrews, *bayt* was often followed by the word *il/el* (divinity, supernatural entity or protector), which gives us *batīl/Bêt-El* (whence 'Betyl'). This composite form originally meaning the mobile sanctuary in which the symbols and objects required for worship were held, eventually itself came to be the symbol and/or object of worship. Cf. H. Lammens, 'Le culte des Bétyles et les processions religieuses chez les Arabes préislamites', *BIFAO*, 17 (1919-1920), pp. 39-101; T. Fahd, *Le Panthéon de l'Arabie*

to define the full meaning which Muḥammad attributed to the expression *ahl al-bayt*, an expression which has simultaneously religious, sacred and political import.[59] A great many studies have been dedicated to this, analysing both the diverse classical interpretations of the expression and the historical and philological material related to it: from H. Lammens and R. Strothmann, who see in it only an allusion to the Prophet's wives[60] and R. Paret, for whom the *ahl al-bayt* means the adherents of the cult of the Kaʿba,[61] to the meticulously argued monographs of M. Sharon on the different meanings attributed to it both in changing times and by different religious and political currents; studies which I consider to be decisive on certain points, and to which I will have occasion to return,[62] and not forgetting W. Madelung, for whom the expression essentially means the descendants of Hāshim in general.[63] Still, it is useful to recall, as I. Goldziher has so aptly shown, that, regardless of the benefits that the Alids were to gain from it, the majority opinion had very early on identified Muḥammad's *ahl al-bayt* with the *ahl al-kisāʾ*, namely Fāṭima, ʿAlī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.[64] An especially telling example of this is that almost all the numerous early interpretations of verse 33:33, on the purity of Muḥammad's *ahl al-bayt*, as recorded by al-Ṭabarī in his monumental Quranic commentary, lean in this direction.[65] Whatever the case may be, with regard to the problem we are concerned with here, it seems frankly unthinkable that ʿAlī would not have claimed to belong to the Prophet's *ahl al-bayt*. He would also have laid an exclusive claim for himself and his progeny to those things in the prophetic

Centrale à la veille de l'Hégire, Paris, 1968, ch. 1; J. Chabbi, *Le Seigneur des tribus*, see index under '*bayt*', '*beth*', '*bétyle*'. On the meaning of the word in south-Arabian language see A.F.L. Beeston, 'The So-called Harlots of Ḥaḍramawt', *Oriens*, 5 (1952), pp. 21 sq., 'Kingship in Ancient South-Arabia', *JESHO*, 15 (1972), pp. 251 sq.

59 M. Sharon interprets the expression to mean, in a pre-Islamic context, 'the leading noble families' among tribes, and more exclusively the tribe of the Quraysh; see his '*Ahl al-Bayt* – People of the House', *JSAI*, 8 (1986), pp. 169-184, respectively pp. 183 and 179.

60 Especially in Q 33:33; H. Lammens, *Fāṭima et les filles de Mahomet*, Rome, 1912, p. 97 and *passim*; R. Strothmann, *Das Staatsrecht der Zaiditen*, Strasbourg, 1912, pp. 19 sq.

61 Especially in Q 11:73 and 33:33; cf. his article 'Der Plan einer neuen, leicht kommentierten wissenschaftlichen Koranübersetzung', in Paret (ed.), *Orientalistische Studien Enno Littmann zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, Leiden 1935, pp. 121-130, esp. pp. 127 sq.

62 M. Sharon, '*Ahl al-Bayt* – People of the House'; id. 'The Umayyads as *ahl al-bayt*', *JSAI*, 14 (1991), pp. 115-152; see also his article, 'The Development of the Debate around the Legitimacy of Authority in Early Islam', *JSAI*, 5 (1984), pp. 121-142.

63 W. Madelung, 'The *Hāshimiyyāt* of al-Kumayt', esp. pp. 15, 21, 24-25.

64 I. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, ed. S.M. Stern, vol. 2, London, 1971, pp. 103 sq.; see also sources noted by M. Sharon, '*Ahl al-Bayt* – People of the House', pp. 172-173.

65 Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, ed. M.M. Shākir and A.M. Shākir, Cairo, 1373-1388/1955-1969, vol. 22, pp. 5-7.

heritage touching both spiritual and temporal matters, thus making of them a veritable collection of articles of faith called *dīn ʿAlī*.[66]

ʿAlī is actually related to Muḥammad by the two principal sorts of Arab *'qarāba'* (family ties), namely *nasab* and *muṣāhara*.[67] Terms difficult to render in translation, the first conveys the sense of genealogy, provenance or paternal lineage, bonds of blood or alliance, noble birth and affinity. The second, as rich in meaning as the first, suggests in its original sense the idea of fusion and thus affinities and relationships through women, and alliance by marriage. Thus, in general, *nasab* refers to a relationship by blood and *muṣāhara* to a bond or alliance by marriage.[68] ʿAlī was Muḥammad's cousin, the son of his paternal uncle, one of the noblest relationships of *nasab* in the tribal conception.[69] Once he became the Prophet's son-in-law, he was also related by *muṣāhara*, thus becoming *walī*, that is, relative by blood and/or by alliance;[70] the significance this term was to acquire later in Shiʿism is well known.

Ancestral beliefs about the supranatural aspects of relationships also seem to have played a role in the establishment of 'the religion of ʿAlī'. These beliefs seem to be inextricably linked to certain traits of Muḥammad's personality as some of his contemporaries saw him.[71] He may really have had a supranatural

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66   In his long letter to Muʿāwiya, recorded by several historiographers (al-Minqarī, al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī) and analysed by Madelung (*The Succession*, pp. 212 sq.), ʿAlī seems to have identified the *ahl al-bayt* with the Banū Hāshim and Banū l-Muṭṭalib; however, on the succession to the Prophet, he would most certainly have been thinking of himself and his sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, the sole male progeny of Muḥammad.

67   See P. Bonte, E. Conte, C. Hamès and A.W. Ould Cheikh, *Al-Ansāb. La quête des origines*, Paris, 1991, pp. 65sq. The third aspect of the *qarāba* is the *riḍāʿa* (adoption by milk); see *ibid.*, pp. 73 sqq.

68   For a more detailed analysis see J. Cuisenier and A. Miquel, "La terminologie arabe de la parenté. Analyse sémantique et analyse componentielle", *L'Homme* 5/3-4; 1965, pp. 15-79. In the Quran, both terms are indissociably linked in 25:54: "And it is He who created of water a mortal, and made him kindred of blood and marriage (… *fa-jaʿalahu nasaban wa ṣihran*)". E. Conte proposes "parents (par le sang) et alliés (par le mariage ou les femmes)" (*Al-Ansāb. La quête des origines*, p. 66).

69   At the moment when the tribe is defined as an organic group of relatives descended from the same lineage – *awlād al-ʿamm*; on this important notion, studies by the earliest major Arabic and Islamic scholars are still the most reliable reference works; see for example I. Goldziher, 'Polyandry and Exogamy among the Arabs', *The Academy*, 13/26 (1880); J. Wellhausen, 'Die Ehe bei den Arabern', *Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften und der Georg-Augustus-Universität zu Göttingen*, 11 (1893); O. Proksch, *Über die Blutrache bei den vorislamischen Arabern und Mohammeds Stellung zu ihr*, Leipzig, 1899, esp. pp. 33 sq.

70   Cf. Chabbi, *Le Seigneur des tribus*, p. 654.

71   On this position, now see U. Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder. The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims*, Princeton, 1995.

aura in their eyes. T. Fahd has shown that the prophetic aspect of Muḥammad could be seen as linking him to ancient figures with magical associations, the 'soothsayer' (*kāhin*), the 'poet' (*shāʿir*), the 'clairvoyant' (*ʿarrāf*), and so forth: we find here and there, obviously with different combinations and justifications, communication with supernatural beings, different kinds of divination, inspirations and oracles, healing powers, use of a secret language, knowledge of hidden things, power over objects and so forth. With subtle analysis, this important scholar of Muslim occult sciences, has, in my view, shown to what extent ancient Arab beliefs and the idea of the prophet mingled and influenced each other.[72] In numerous passages of the Quran, Muḥammad was compared by his adversaries to *kāhin*s, *sāḥir*s and *shāʿir*s (Q 37:36; 52:29; 69:42) and he was often accused of being possessed or inspired by *jinn*s (expressions *majnūn* or *mā bihi ... min jinna*). J. Chabbi argues that this was a means by which the Prophet's adversaries sought to trivialise his actions, portraying him as a kind of magical figure, not in a relationship with God but instead with different kinds of 'genies', characters familiar in Arabia from time immemorial.[73]

On the famous question of Muḥammad's human 'informants', relentlessly upheld by his adversaries, Hūd b. Muhkim/Muhakkam (second half of third/ninth century) records a saying by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), according to which one of these presumed informants was a servant of Ibn al-Ḥaḍramī, the famous soothsayer of the age of the *jāhiliyya*.[74] In another text, of al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122), the same al-Ḥasan speaks of ʿUbayd b. al-Khaḍir, an Ethiopian soothsayer.[75] According to Ibn al-Athīr, before his conversion to Islam, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb regarded the Prophet as a *kāhin* and a *shāʿir*.[76] Finally, according to a text of Ibn Saʿd, Muḥammad himself, at the outset, was concerned about

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72   Fahd, *La divination arabe*, pp. 63 sq. ('Divination et prophétie'), pp. 88 sq. ('Prophète et devin') and p. 263, *passim*; see also T. Fahd, 'Le monde du sorcier en Islam', in *Le monde du sorcier*, Paris, 1966, pp. 155-204. On the difficulty of translating the term *kāhin* (priest – soothsayer – oracle – doctor), see *La divination arabe*, pp. 94-95. Regarding *shāʿir* ('poet'), etymologically 'he who knows' and has theurgic knowledge, see also F. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*, Leiden, 1971, pp. 12-13.

73   J. Chabbi, *Le Seigneur des tribus*, pp. 182-183 and pp. 527-529.

74   Hūd b. Muḥkim/Muḥakkam al-Ḥawwārī, *Tafsīr*, ed. B. Sharīfī, Beirut, 1990, vol. 2, p. 389.

75   Abū Muḥammad al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī al-musammā bi-Maʿālim al-tanzīl*, Ḥ.ʿA. al-ʿAkk and M. Sawār, Beirut, 1992, vol. 3, p. 361. Regarding the Prophet's 'informants', now see C. Gilliot, 'Les "informateurs" juifs et chrétiens de Muḥammad', *JSAI*, 22 (1998), pp. 84-126, a study which revisits and very usefully supplements the preceding works by A. Sprenger and T. Nöldeke (respectively: *Das Leben und die Lehre des Moḥammad*, 2 vols, [Berlin, 1861-1862], and 'Hatte Muḥammad christliche Lehrer?', *ZDMG*, 12, [1858], pp. 699-708).

76   *Usd al-ghāba*, ed. M. Fāyiḍ *et al.*, Cairo, 1963-1972, vol. 4, p. 74.

being a soothsayer; terrified by the supernatural voices he was hearing, he is said to have told his wife Khadīja:

> I hate nothing more than idols and the *kuhhān*, but I am afraid of being a *kāhin* myself.[77]

We know that in a number of ancient belief systems, bodily fluids such as blood, sperm, saliva, milk and sweat, are considered to be agents for thaumaturgic transmission; they can contain and transmit beneficial or harmful elements, faculties, virtues or spiritual influences from one bearer to another and, more specifically, hereditarily, to their descendants.[78] The Arabs, too, had these kinds of beliefs. The *kāhin* was believed to have the power to master and consciously and intentionally control what he transmitted through his bodily fluids. His supernatural gifts were believed to be hereditary.[79] In a number of records Muḥammad appears to have been associated with this idea, both directly and allusively, in connection with different bodily fluids.

The mixing of blood made two men become brothers or allied relatives.[80] J. Wellhausen is right to compare the Arab blood pacts with *Verbrüderung* and *adoptio in fratres*.[81] In spite of the great discretion of the Islamic sources, it seems certain that rituals of 'the pact of chosen brotherhood' (*muʾākhāt*), which the Prophet performed twice upon his arrival in Medina, were accompanied by the exchange of blood. A "pagan" practice, originating according to L. Caetani, from the ancient Arabic *ḥilf*,[82] and already a subject of the pre-Islamic poetry of al-Aʿshā Maymūn,[83] it carried infinitely more weight than Quranic and/or Islamic arguments in winning over the Anṣār in Medina. According to a text of Ibn Hishām, on the occasion of the second meeting in

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77   Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1/1, p. 129.

78   E.g. A. van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*, Paris, 1909, pp. 41 sqq.

79   T. Witton Davies, *Magic, Divination and Demonology*, London, 1933; (rpr. Baghdad, n.d. [ca. 1960]), pp. 70 sqq.; E.O. James, *The Nature and Function of Priesthood*, London, 1955, pp. 87 sq.; J. Henninger, *La société bédouine ancienne*, Rome, 1959, index *s.v.*; J. Chelhod, *Les structures du sacré chez les arabes*, Paris, 1986, pp. 189 sq.

80   W. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, 2nd edn, Cambridge, 1903, pp. 50 sq. and his *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 2nd ed, Edinburgh, 1914, pp. 314 sq, 479 sq.

81   J. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, Berlin and Leipzig, 1884, pp. 124, 127-128.

82   L. Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam*, vol. 1, p. 408.

83   'They swear by darkly intense black blood: we never wish to separate,' cited by J. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, p. 128, and reported by E. Conte, 'Entrer dans le sang. Perceptions arabes des origines', in P. Bonte *et al., Al-Ansāb. La quête des origines*, p. 92.

ʿAqaba, and faced with the reluctance of the Medinans to conclude a pact with him, Muḥammad declared:

> Your blood is mine. I am one of you and you are mine. Your enemies are my enemies; your friends, my friends. Choose twelve leaders among you to represent you in the ritual of the oath (ḥilf).[84]

At the battle of Ḥunayn in the year 8/630, and general disarray when the Muslims were ambushed by the Hawāzin, the Prophet asked his uncle ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib to use his booming voice to remind the troops of the bonds sealed by blood.[85] The different episodes of Ibn Hishām's account show that this kind of speech, rooted in ancient culture, was more favourably received by the Arabs than the prophetic statements of Muḥammad.[86] The second pact of brotherhood is of even more interest to us. This, of course, is the ritual of the muʾākhāt, promoted by Muḥammad (according to Ibn Ḥabīb)[87] among the Muslims of Mecca, from the Meccan period onwards; or (according to Ibn Hishām)[88] upon his arrival in Medina among both the Meccans and Medinans.

During the 'twinning' ritual, Muḥammad chose ʿAlī as his brother. What is remarkable is that, according to Ibn Ḥabīb, the muʾākhāt, made on 'the basis of law/right (?) and sharing' (ʿalā l-ḥaqq wa l-muʾāsāt) implied that, upon the death of either individual, the other, his 'brother', had priority as inheritor,[89] which seems authentic, since in verses 4:33, 8:75 and especially 33:6, the Quran seems to call this institution into vigorously question, by stressing the priority of a blood relationship over the pact of brotherhood.[90] From his examination of, amongst other things, Roman legal sources relating to the governance of the Bedouin population in Syria during the fifth century AD which had been studied by Bruns and Sachau, (who had once more proved this to be an age-old practice), E. Conte concludes that the muʾākhāt, sealed by blood, made of these 'twin brothers' close relatives (qarāʾib), henceforth classified as first cousins (ibnā l-ʿamm) and consequently inheritors of the male lineage (ʿaṣaba); in

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84   Ibn Hishām, al-Sīra al-nabawiyya, ed. M. Saqqā, I. Abyārī and ʿA. Shalabī, 2nd ed, Cairo, 1955, vol. 1, pp. 446 and 454; al-Ṭabarī, De Goeje, vol. 1, pp. 1220-1221.

85   Ibn Hishām, op. cit, pp. 442-443.

86   Cf. on this subject, W. Atallah, 'Les survivances Préislamiques chez le Prophète et ses Compagnons', Arabica, 24/3 (1977), pp. 299-310.

87   Kitāb al-muḥabbar, ed. I. Lichtenstaedter, Hyderabad, 1942, pp. 70 sq.

88   Ibn Hishām, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 344-346; also, Serjeant, 'The "Constitution" of Medina', p. 6.

89   Ibn Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-muḥabbar, p. 71.

90   See also W.M. Watt, 'Muʾākhāt', EI2; Conte, 'Entrer dans le sang. Perceptions arabes des origines', pp. 93-99.

establishing this relationship, the 'twinning' pact created a common filiation between 'brothers';[91] which is to say that the *muʾākhāt* itself enabled ʿAlī to claim the prophetic heritage. This may explain the almost complete silence of non-Shiʿi sources on this episode in the life of Muḥammad, a rather curious silence about one of the founding acts of the Muslim community in Medina.[92]

But there is more. For the Arabs, *kahāna* is hereditary, as is nobility. The qualities of the *kāhin* or of the nobles are passed on by various means, including the sperm of the father.[93] In pre-Islamic Arabia, the Bedouins went so far as to 'lend' their wives to nobles whose sperm was highly prized so that would bear children of distinguished pedigree.[94] As for the qualities of saintliness, Islamic sources speak repeatedly of the powerful transmission of the seminal substance from Muḥammad's ancestors, manifested by the 'Light' and symbolised by the *ṣulb* (kidney, loins), an organ believed to be the source of the semen.[95] Passing through the woman's uterus (*raḥim*), the source of her 'seed', the man's semen forms the milk in the mother's breast, which even further facilitates the transmission of the father's qualities to his child; whence the inseparable link between sperm and milk which is found in expressions like 'milk is from man' (*al-laban min al-marʾ*), 'the reproductive/stallion milk' (*laban al-faḥl*) or 'the unique sperm' (*liqāḥ wāḥid*), which means both the man's seminal fluid and the woman's milk.[96] The father's sperm provides the child's flesh and blood (*dam wa laḥm*); the mother gives form to this matter and completes the formation of the child with her milk, identified with the father's sperm.[97] Springing from the same Hāshimid seed as the Prophet and married to Fāṭima, ʿAlī also became the father of the male descendants of Muḥammad. And Fāṭima, whose most usual title among the Shiʿis is 'the Confluence of two

91   Conte, *art. cit*, p. 94.

92   Regarding the total silence of the sources, see D. Santillana, *Istituzioni di diritto musulmano malichita con riguardo anche al sistema sciafiita*, Rome, 1938, vol. 1, p. 196, note 8; see also the 'skeletal' bibliography of the article 'Muʾākhāt' by W.M. Watt.

93   For example T. Fahd, *La divination arabe*, pp. 23 sq.

94   On this practice known as *iktisāb*, i.e. 'obtaining' (of the seminal substance and thus noble race), see al-Alūsī, *Bulūgh al-arab fī maʿrifat aḥwāl al-ʿarab*, Cairo, 1928, vol. 2, p. 4. The custom still described by the terms *iktisāb* or *kasb*, is to this day practised among some Yemeni tribes, cf. J. Chelhod, 'Du nouveau à propos du "matriarcat" arabe', *Arabica*, 28/1 (1981), p. 82.

95   For sources and studies on this subject see Amir-Moezzi, *Guide divin*, see index under 'ṣulb', 'aṣlāb' and 'nūr'.

96   J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, Oxford, 1950, p. 194 and n. 4; S. Altorki, 'Milk-Kinship in Arab Society: An Unexplored Problem in the Ethnography of Marriage', *Ethnology*, 19 (1980), pp. 233-244, esp. 234 sqq.

97   P. Bonte, 'Egalité et hiérarchie dans une tribu maure', in *Al-Ansāb. La quête des origines*, p. 158.

Lights' (*majmaʿ al-nūrayn*),[98] born from Muḥammad's seed and the recipient of ʿAlī's, became the other agent in the transmission of prophetic virtues. ʿAlī seems to have been fully convinced of truth of these beliefs.

According to al-Ṭabarī, ʿAlī, in Kufa during his conflict with Muʿāwiya just before the arbitration of Ṣiffīn, at the moment when part of his army had dispersed, decided to join battle and fight to the death if necessary. But, seeing al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, he realised that if they were to perish, the Muslims would be entirely deprived of the descendance of the Prophet. Al-Ṭabarī's account seems to imply that this was the main reason why ʿAlī pit and end to his campaign.[99] According to al-Maqrīzī, some Muslims held that if ʿAlī, being also father of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, had directly succeeded the Prophet, many would have concluded that the caliphate had become a hereditary sovereignty (*mulk mutawārath*). This seems historically plausible.[100]

Saliva is also considered to be an agent in thaumaturgic transmission. The giving of saliva is the famous practice known as *taḥnīk*, termed 'sputation' by C. Gilliot.[101] However, according to Arab lexicographers, Ibn Manẓūr or al-Zabīdī for example, the verbal form means 'to rub the roof of the mouth' when accompanied with a complementary noun (*ḥannaka bi-* e.g. *ḥannakahu bi-tamratin*, rub the roof of another's mouth with a [crushed] date, *ḥannakahu bi-l-iṣbiʿ*, with a finger). Employed without a complement, it means to put one's saliva in someone else's mouth (*ḥannaka Zaydun ʿAmran*, lit.: with his saliva, Zayd rubs the roof of ʿAmr's mouth); in the latter instance, the meaning may be made more explicit by the addition of the word, 'saliva' (*ḥannakahu bi-rīqihi*).[102] Saliva can protect, heal, pass on virtues or skills, but also destroy or humiliate. Depending on the intention of the person who performs it, the ritual may be an initiation, a blessing, a medicine or a malign act.[103] Both *ḥadīth* and *sīra* literary and historiographical works record many instances of the Prophet's practising *taḥnīk*. The purpose is either therapeutic – Muḥammad healing the palsied hand of Umm Jalīl bint al-Mujallal's son[104] and curing epilepsy in a

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98   See al-Ṭurayḥī, Fakhr al-Dīn, *Majmaʿ al-baḥrayn wa maṭlaʿ al-nayyirayn*, Tehran, 1321/1903, table of contents under '*majmaʿ al-nūrayn*'.

99   Al-Ṭabarī, ed. De Goeje, vol. 1, pp. 3346-3347.

100 *Al-Nizāʿ wa l-takhāṣum*, p. 92.

101 In his seminal article 'Portrait "mythique" d'Ibn ʿAbbās', *Arabica*, 32 (1985), pp. 127-184; see pp. 143-144.

102 *Lisān al-ʿarab, Tāj al-ʿarūs*, s.v.

103 Van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*, pp. 138-139 (*taḥnīk* as initiatory ritual); J. Desparmet, *Le mal magique*, Algiers and Paris, 1932, pp. 98 ff. (practice called *tfīl*, from the root TFL – to spit out – in Morocco).

104 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, Cairo, 1313/1896, vol. 3, p. 107.

seven-year-old child;[105] – or initiatory – Muḥammad transmitting knowledge to Ibn 'Abbās.[106] But it serves especially for the transmission of blessings and moral virtues: many accounts tell of parents taking their children to the Prophet for him to practise *taḥnīk* on them;[107] others speak of new converts asking the Prophet to do so.[108] It is useful here to note the direct link between *taḥnīk* and *baraka/tabarruk*. In a number of *ḥadīth*s, both roots are used simultaneously (*fa-yubarriku 'alayhim wa yuḥannikuhum*; "so that he may bless them" *ḥannakahu fa-barraka 'alayhi* "he spit in his mouth and blessed him", etc.).[109] *Baraka*, a word in Muslim hagiography which eventually came to mean a kind of mysterious and beneficial emanation, an energy or spiritual influx transmitted by contact, affecting living things and objects, originally meant abundant rain or the tethering of a camel near a source of water; or yet again what the camel does while there, chewing on its food and (once mixed in saliva) feeding its young with it. In his excellent article on this, J. Chelhod demonstrates how this second meaning led to the interpretation of *baraka* as the spiritual energy that the father passes on to his newborn child by placing him upon his knees and putting saliva in his mouth, thereby blessing him according him his protection.[110] The common element between *taḥnīk* and *baraka* is the idea of a nourishing and invigorating liquid (rain, saliva and even a source of water) for both the body and the soul, which is a veritable benediction.

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105   Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīra Ibn Isḥāq al-musammāt bi-kitāb al-mubtada' wa l-mab'ath wa l-maghāzī*, ed. M. Ḥamidullāh, Rabat, 1976, p. 103; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3 vols, Cairo, 1378/1958, 'ṭibb', 21.

106   Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa l-nihāya*, Beirut, 1977, vol. 8, p. 295. See Gilliot, 'Portrait "mythique" d'Ibn 'Abbās', p. 143; cf. also Van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*, p. 138. In 1973, I witnessed the ritual of *taḥnīk* among the Qādirī dervishes of Iranian Baluchistan; according to them, the master transmits *'ilm* and *'amal* to the disciple, which to the dervishes mean initiatory knowledge and supernatural powers.

107   Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ''aqīqa', 1; 'adab', 109; Muslim, *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2 vols, rpr. Istanbul, 1383/1963, 'adab', vol. 1, pp. 23-28, 'ṭahāra', 101; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 3, pp. 105-106, 171, 175, 181, 188, 254 and 288; vol. 4, p. 399; vol. 6, pp. 93, 212, 347. Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 'adab', 107. On this aspect of the practice, now consult A. Giladi, 'Some Notes on *taḥnīk* in Medieval Islam', *JNES*, 3 (1988), pp. 175-179.

108   Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 'manāqib al-Anṣār', 45; 'zakāt', 69, 'dhabā'iḥ', 35; al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ/Sunan*, ed. A.M. Shākir, 5 vols, Cairo, 1356/1937, 'manāqib', 44; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 'jihād', 52. In their translation of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* by al-Bukhārī, O. Houdas and W. Marçais seem to wish to ignore the meaning of *taḥnīk* employed without a complementary noun; indeed the term is regularly translated with the complement (in this instance, 'a date'), even when the original text does not mention it; see El-Bokhâri, *Les traditions islamiques*, 4 vols, Paris, 1903-1914, rpr. 1977, see vol. 2, pp. 681 sq. and n. 2. In the 5th volume (intro and amends by M. Hamidullah, Paris, 1981), the error has not been corrected.

109   Refer to the preceding two footnotes.

110   J. Chelhod, 'La *baraka* chez les Arabes', *RHR*, 148/1 (1955), pp. 68-88; see also id., *Les structures du sacré chez les arabes*, index and esp. pp. 58-62.

Here too, as in the case of *muʾākhāt* examined above, ʿAlī and his sons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn would appear to have been ostracised by non-Shiʿi authors. There is no mention of them in the numerous *ḥadīth*s or accounts about *taḥnīk*s by the Prophet. Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), a pro-ʿAbbasid author, goes so far as to say that, as far as he knew, except for Ibn ʿAbbās, no one had received saliva from the Prophet;[111] it is impossible that he would not have been aware of at least some of the numerous traditions reported in the canonical works of *ḥadīth* noted above. How can one imagine that Muḥammad had thus 'blessed' a large number of his companions and followers, without doing so to his own 'brother', cousin, and future son-in-law, who was also undoubtedly one of his closest companions? Yet again, is it conceivable that the Prophet would have 'blessed' a large number of children only, to neglect, forget or deliberately deprive his very own grandchildren, his own male descendants, of this blessing? To my knowledge, only Shiʿi literature records *taḥnīk*s that the Prophet practised upon ʿAlī and the sons born to Fāṭima – a practice that, according to the same sources, the imams were to continue.[112]

Tradition has it that Muḥammad was adopted at very young age by his paternal uncle Abū Ṭālib, and became, well before the advent of Islam, 'the adopted brother' of his cousin ʿAlī. Both this *qarāba* and the spiritual links between them were such that ʿAlī did not hesitate to embrace the religious message of Muḥammad. Friend and no doubt blessed confidant of the latter, his constant companion, 'twinned' with him by virtue of the *muʾākhāt* ritual, during which there may have been an exchange of blood, an intrepid warrior for his Cause, ʿAlī married Fāṭima, Muḥammad's daughter, and became the father of the only male descendants of the Prophet. Some Companions were privileged to have one or several of these bonds with Muḥammad, but none except ʿAlī had them all. Is this why some of the faithful may have believed that ʿAlī was considered by Muḥammad to be the Messiah of the End of Times? (see above chap. 2).

Furthermore ʿAlī alone had the advantage of two fundamental *qarāba*s: the 'twinning' and the fathering of male descendants. He thus had cogent reasons, confirmed, in his opinion by the Quran and even more so by ancient beliefs, for believing in his own divine election and in that of his progeny by Fāṭima

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111 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa l-nihāya*, vol. 8, p. 295; elsewhere, he recognises that 'prophetic heritage' returns to the immediate family of the prophets, Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, vol. 5, p. 290; also his *Tafsīr*, ed. Beirut, 1966, vol. 5, pp. 452 sq., but seems to maintain that this family consists of ʿAbbās and his descendants (*Tafsīr*, vol. 5, pp. 456-457, a pro-ʿAbbasid version of the *ḥadīth ahl al-kisāʾ*, in which these are identified as ʿAbbās and his sons).

112 For examples and sources see Amir-Moezzi, *Guide divin*, pp. 193-195. Here the Prophet not only introduces his saliva into the mouth but also into the eyes of the recipient. Moreover, he does the same with his sweat.

thereafter. Surely, this 'election' was the essential core of what his contemporaries would have called *dīn ʿAlī*.

5   Reactions and Consequences

Whatever the original meaning of *ahl bayt al-nabī*, which rapidly became synonymous with *āl Muḥammad*, *āl al-nabī*, *āl al-rasūl* and so on, ʿAlī would surely not have failed to claim it for himself and his household. Certain Hāshimids, especially the Alids, seem to have claimed it from the first/seventh century; this seems apparent, for example, in a few verses of ancient poets such as Abū l-Aswad al-Duʾalī (d. 69/688), Kuthayyir ʿAzza (d. 105/723) or al-Kumayt b. Zayd (d. 126/743).[113] From the extensive and pertinent analyses of the expression and its religious and political implications by M. Sharon in his many publications, it transpires that popular opinion during this period identified the *ahl bayt al-nabī* with the Hāshimids in general and more specifically with the household of ʿAlī (this is also what emerges from a large number of *ḥadīth*s on the *ahl al-kisāʾ* studied by I. Goldziher; see above), without, however, this popular respect actually translating into their recognition of his right to govern the community.[114] Of those who shared this respect, some Alids seem to have been the first to claim his political legitimacy, that, in other words, the caliphate was exclusively reserved for ʿAlī. One can reasonably assume that they were followers of '*dīn ʿAlī*'. M. Sharon examines the probable influence of the Jewish conception of the House of David, very present in Iraq, on the population in Kūfa, the homeland and stronghold of the Alids. According to this conception, leadership of the community is exclusively reserved to the descendants of the House of David.[115] Elsewhere, the same scholar seems to include the influence of the Christian concept of the 'Holy Family' (equally omnipresent in Iraq during the early centuries of Islam), by underscoring the constant comparisons that Shiʿi literature establishes between the figures of Mary and Fāṭima.[116]

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113   For the first and third, see above. For the second, see al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, vol. 9, p. 14; al-Nāshiʾ al-Akbar, *Masāʾil al-imāma*, ed. J. van Ess, Beirut, 1971, p. 26.

114   M. Sharon, 'The Umayyads as *ahl al-bayt*', addendum in response to the article '*Hāshimiyyāt*' by W. Madelung, pp. 151-152.

115   *Ibid.*, p. 126; Jewish Exilarchate (in Arabic *raʾs al-jālūt*, from the Aramaic *rêsh galūtha*, lit. 'Leader of the Diaspora') resided in Iraq and represented, in himself, the divine election of descendants of the House of David. See also, M. Gil, 'The Exilarchate', in D. Frank (ed.), *The Jews of Medieval Islam*, Leiden, 1995, pp. 33-65.

116   Sharon, '*Ahl al-Bayt* – People of the House', p. 173. For sources and studies regarding these comparisons, see now C.P. Clohessy, *Fâṭima*, chapter 4.

He even considers it to be entirely plausible that there existed a version of the Quran from Kūfa in which ʿAlī and members of his family would have been frequently mentioned numerous times,[117] just as Imami *ḥadīth*s had repeatedly and openly affirmed up to the mid-fourth/tenth century.[118]

Quite apart from some violent reactions against the importance given to kinship with the Prophet or against the legitimacy of the Prophet's family, those, for example, of the Khārijīs,[119] of ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr,[120] and of some *ahl al-ḥadīth*,[121] the non-Alid members of the Prophet's family and their descendants, that is the Umayyads and after them the ʿAbbāsids, may have responded by trying to appropriate the title of *ahl al-bayt* for themselves. Although prudence prevents M. Sharon from explicitly declaring his position on the matter, on many occasions he seems to suggest that Umayyad and ʿAbbasid attempts to identify with the *ahl bayt al-nabī* might have been in reaction to much older Alid claims.[122] At one point, their common resistance to the Umayyads drew the Alids and ʿAbbāsids closer together.[123] However, once in power, the ʿAbbāsids distanced themselves from the Alids by describing themselves as the only 'Holy Family', as witnessed by, among other things, the attempt to undermine the status of Fāṭima and the affirm the legitimacy of ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and his sons as the *ahl al-kisāʾ*.[124]

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117   'The Umayyads as *ahl al-bayt*', p. 127.

118   On this version of the Qurʾān, see e.g. E. Kohlberg, 'Some Notes on the Imāmite Attitude to the Qurʾan', in S.M. Stern, A. Hourani and V. Brown (eds), *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition*, Oxford, 1972, pp. 209-224; Amir-Moezzi, *Guide divin*, pp. 200-227; M.M. Bar-Asher, 'Variant Readings and Additions of the Imāmī-Shīʿa to the Quran', *IOS*, 13 (1993), pp. 39-74. And now E. Kohlberg and M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification*, Introduction.

119   Cf. e.g. al-Ṭabarī, ed. De Goeje, vol. 1, p. 3350.

120   According to an account by al-Zuhrī, reported by al-Balādhurī, Ibn Zubayr considered the Prophet's family to be 'petty and bad' (*uhayla sūʾ/saw*ʾ), *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol. 5, ed. S. Goitein, Jerusalem, 1936, p. 372.

121   Those, for example, that transmitted traditions regarding the *kufr* of Muḥammad's father and ancestors; cf. Muslim, vol. 1, pp. 132-133; al-Ḥalabī, *al-Sīrat al-ḥalabiyya*, Beirut, n.d., vol. 1, p. 29; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, vol. 11, pp. 30-31. For the anti-Alid twist given to these traditions, see al-Zurqānī, *Sharḥ ʿalā l-Mawāhib al-laduniyya li-l-Qasṭallānī*, Cairo, 1329/1911, vol. 1, p. 179, according to which 'the infidel father' of the *ḥadīth* in fact designates Abū Ṭālib, since in Arabic 'one who raises a child is also called father'.

122   '*Ahl al-Bayt* – People of the House', p. 183; 'The Umayyads as *ahl al-bayt*', pp. 127, 151.

123   Gilliot, 'Portrait "mythique" d'Ibn ʿAbbās', pp. 159sqq., esp. p. 161; Madelung, "Abd Allāh b. ʿAbbās and Shiʿite Law'.

124   Sharon, '*Ahl al-Bayt*', pp. 174, 176-179, esp. p. 177. Although not having especially examined the issue, it seems to me that many of the accounts of Ibn ʿAbbās's privileged relationship with the Prophet, including the transmission of prophetic knowledge (reports presented and analysed in detail by Gilliot in 'Portrait "mythique"', esp. pp. 134, 140, 142-143, 151-152,

Moreover, the study of *dīn ʿAlī* seems to corroborate suggestion made by G.H. Sadighi and E. Kohlberg that the glorification of ʿAlī, which transforming the historical person into a semi-legendary figure of heroic and even sacred stature, can be traced back to very early times, to the period of his caliphate or even that immediately following the death of the Prophet.[125] A certain reaction against the violent and repressive policies of the first Umayyads, especially Muʿāwiya and his son Yazīd, seems also to have been a catalyst of this process.[126] "Alī's religion' seems thus to have been the early nucleus of what was later to become Shiʿism. Imami sources have retained some reports, admittedly rare, in which the expressions *dīn ʿAlī*, *dīn Ḥasan* and *dīn Ḥusayn* can be found, the last two apparently meaning no less than 'the religion of ʿAlī', but under the imamates of his two sons.[127]

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156) are modelled on the abundant documents about ʿAlī in early Shiʿi works. This issue merits further attention, see also Sharon, *Black Banners from the East*, pp. 126-140 and more especially pp. 93-99 and J. van Ess, 'Les Qadarites et les Ghailānīya de Yazīd III', *SI*, 31 (1970), p. 285.

125   Gh.Ḥ. Ṣadīqī, *Jonbesh hā-ye dīnī-ye Īrānī dar qarn hā-ye dovvom va sevvom-e hejrī*, Tehran, 1372 Sh./1993, pp. 225-226 (this publication is a augmented and updated version of the author's PhD thesis, *Les mouvements religieux iraniens aux II et IIIe siècles de l'hégire* [Paris, 1938]); E. Kohlberg, 'Some Imāmī Shīʿī Views on the *ṣaḥāba*', *JSAI*, 5 (1984) (rpr. in *Belief and Law*, article IX), pp. 145-146.

126   W. Madelung, *The Succession*, pp. 309-310.

127   We have already examined two reports by al-Majlisī (d. 1111/ 1699-1700) in his *Biḥār al-anwār* (notes 2 and 6 above). See also *Biḥār*, vol. 44, p. 125 (a letter from Ziyād b. Abīhi to Muʿāwiya in which he writes that the Ḥaḍramīs are followers of ʿAlī's religion – based on *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*, a work of uncertain attribution but cited by authors of the fourth/tenth century); vol. 44, p. 213 (a letter from al-Ḥusayn to Muʿāwiya in which he refers to the same letter from Ziyād – based on the *Rijāl* by al-Kashshī, d. fourth/tenth century); vol. 45, p. 136 (Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya says to Zaynab bint ʿAlī: 'Your father [ʿAlī] and your brother [al-Ḥusayn] excluded themselves from the religion.' Zaynab: 'If your grandfather [Abū Sufyān], your father [Muʿāwiya] and you had been Muslims, you would have returned to the grace and religion of God, the religion of my father and brother.' Based on the *Manāqib* by Ibn Shahrāshūb, d. 588/1192); also al-Mufid (d. 413/1022): *al-Irshād*, ed. H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī, Tehran, 1346 Sh./1968, vol. 2, pp. 106-107 (during the battle of Karbalāʾ, Nāfiʿ b. Hilāl al-Bajalī, a supporter of al-Ḥusayn, recites the following verse: 'I am Ibn Hilāl al-Bajalī / I am a follower of the religion of ʿAlī / And the religion of the latter is the religion of the Prophet.' His adversary replies: 'I am the follower of the religion of Uthmān'; it remains for Nāfiʿ to retort: 'You are [in fact] a follower of the religion of Satan'; also *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 45, p. 19 and n. 1 by the editor on the faulty meter of the poem; in the version reported by Ibn Shahrāshūb in *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, 3 vols [Najaf, 1956], vol. 3, p. 252, other verses are attributed to Nāfiʿ: 'I am the young Yemeni man of the Bajalīs / My religion is that of Ḥusayn and ʿAlī'; *Biḥār*, vol. 45, p. 27); Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, vol. 3, p. 251 (also during the battle of Karbalāʾ, verses by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Yazanī: 'I am the son of ʿAbd Allāh of the Āl Yazan / My religion is that of Ḥusayn and Ḥasan';

Shiʿism in its different forms seems to be, in effect, a very considerable development, obviously with resultant major new doctrinal implications, of a variety of components which composed 'the religion of ʿAlī':[128] the cult of *qarāba*, the notion of prophetic heritage, the divine election of ʿAlī and his descendants, with ancestral and natural aspects, but also supernatural, thaumaturgic and initiatory aspects linked to the prophetic 'Holy Family'. In this evolution, the theophanic dimension of the figure of ʿAlī, his divine attributes probably deriving from his early messianic status, occupies a central place. That is what we shall examine in the following chapters.

Biḥār, vol. 45, p. 22). In addition, apart from written sources, Shiʿism has also retained *'Dīn ʿAlī'* as a personal name, as seen at the beginning of this chapter.

128   It is useful to note here a remarkable and probably ancient evolution in which the aspects which are specifically Arab and ancestral and which underlie a large part of *dīn ʿAlī*, were progressively transmuted into an initiatory and esoteric nature in Shiʿism. This evolution seems to date especially from the period of the imamates of Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 115 or 119/732 or 737) and Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) (cf. J. Ruska, *Arabische Alchemisten. 11. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, der sechste Imām* [Heidelberg, 1924]; M.E.G. Hodgson, 'How Did the Early Shīʿa Become Sectarian?', *JAOS*, 75, 1955). To illustrate this evolution, I will confine myself to examples drawn from early Imami *ḥadīth*s: the replacement of the tribal concept of *ḥilm* by *ʿaql* (which I have, in this particular context, translated as 'intelligence of the sacred' or 'hiero-intelligence') which, in terms of wisdom, is equivalent to *ʿilm* (in the sense of 'initiatory knowledge') (cf. *Guide divin*, esp. pp. 15-28 and 174-199). The content of the Prophet's saliva (or sweat) is said to be 'initiatory knowledge' (ʿAlī often begins his sermons with these words: 'O people! Question me before you lose me! I am the Bearer of initiatory knowledge; I carry in me the Prophet's saliva that he made me drink drop by drop. Question me for I hold the knowledge of Beginnings and Ends', for example, Ibn Bābūya al-Ṣadūq, *Amālī/Majālis*, ed. M.B. Kamareʾī [Tehran, 1404/1984], p. 341). After receiving Muḥammad's saliva in his eyes, ʿAlī acquired the power 'to see' and to know the true nature of people; see for example, al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, ed. M. Kūčebāghī (2nd ed, Tabriz, n.d. [ca. 1960]), p. 390. When Muḥammad taught ʿAlī the 'thousand chapters' of knowledge, both men perspired and the sweat of each ran upon the body of the other (*Baṣāʾir*, p. 313; see also *Guide divin*, pp. 193-194). In the series of traditions regarding the 'tripartite division of humanity', some, surely the earliest, employ tribal terminology ('We [i.e. the imams] are the descendants of Hāshim, our Shiʿis are Arabs of noble stock [*al-ʿarab*] and the others, Bedouins of inferior descent [*al-aʿrāb*]'; 'We are noble Arabs [*ʿarabī*], our believers are protected allies [*mawālī*] and those that do not possess the same doctrine as us are vile [*ʿilj*]'). Others, clearly later, take up the same division by introducing the initiatory dimension ('Men are divided into three categories: the wise initiator [*ʿālim*, i.e. the imam], the initiated disciple [*mutaʿallim* 'the imam's faithful'] and the foam carried by the wave [*ghuththā*' i.e. the non-believers]'; 'The [true] men are only of two kinds: the wise initiator and the initiated disciple. The others are but vile beings [*hamaj*]'). Regarding these traditions and their analysis, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, 'Seul l'homme de Dieu est humain. Théologie et anthropologie mystique à travers l'exégèse imamite ancienne (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine IV)', *Arabica*, 45 (1998), pp. 193-214 (= *La Religion Discrète*, chapter 8).

Between Divinity and Humanity

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Some Remarks on the Divinity of the Imam

1 Theophanic Being and Perfect Man

In some, it must be said, rather inconspicuous texts, drowned in the mass of traditions which fill the pages of early Twelver compilations, the Imam[1] is described not only as the ideal man of God, but as sharing fully in those Names, Attributes and Acts which theology usually reserves for God alone. This 'figure' of the Imam resembles in a number of fundamental ways the variously named 'Cosmic Man' of Near and Middle Eastern spiritual and religious traditions. In many respects, this figure seems to be the source of the reappearance of this ancient idea in Muslim spirituality.[2] It is equally true that obvious similarities exist between the Imam-God of Shiʿi texts and the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) of Muslim

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1 'Imam' is written with the 'i' upper case when it relates to the ontological, cosmic, archetypal Imam, and lower case when it relates to the historical imam, manifestation of the first on the perceptible level. Also, 'Imami' and 'Twelver' are used interchangeably.

2 In the present state of our knowledge, it still seems audacious to establish links between different pre-Islamic religious traditions and the numerous schools of thought derived from them; even more so because a substantial number of doctrines claim, more or less explicitly, to have emerged from several among them. I confine myself here to some bibliographical references: for discussions on 'Man in the image of God' in Jewish, Christian and Judeo-Christian traditions, consult the extensive bibliography in L. Scheffczyk (ed.), *Der Mensch als Bild Gottes*, Darmstadt, 1969, pp. 526-538; also T.H. Tobin, *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation* Washington, DC, 1983. On the recurring motif of *Imago Dei* in Hellenistic and Gnostic thought, see U. Bianchi (ed.), *La 'doppia' creazione dell'uomo negli Alessandrini, nei Cappadoci nella gnosis*, Rome, 1978. On the concept of Primordial Man in Iranian religions, see the bibliographical study by C. Colpe, 'Der "Iranisch Hintergrund" der islamischen Lehre vom Vollkommenen Menschen', in Ph. Gignoux (ed.), *Recurrent Patterns in Iranian Religions. From Mazdaism to Sufism*, *Studia Iranica*, Cahier 11 (1992). On the Perfect Man in Mazdaeism, see M. Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancient*, Paris, 1963, Livre III, ch. 3. On the Primordial Man in Manichaeism, see H.C. Puech, *Le manichéisme, son fondateur, sa doctrine*, Paris, 1949 (Bibliography to be supplemented by H C. Puech, 'le Manichéisme', in *l'Histoire des Religions, Encyclopédie de la Pléiade*, vol. 2, pp. 523-645). For Assyro-Babylonian religions, there is valuable information in S. Parpola, 'The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 52/3 (1993), pp. 161-208, and see now *L'ésotérisme shiʿite, ses racines et ses prolongements*, dir. M.A. Amir-Moezzi, ed. with M. de Cillis, D. De Smet and O. Mir-Kasimov, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Turnhout, 2017.

theosophy, an ontologically necessary intermediary between God and the world, the mysterious ultimate goal and 'Secret of secrets' for the theosopher.[3]

In this regard, the most representative and outspoken Shiʿi texts are undoubtedly certain sermons attributed to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the imam "par excellence" and the 'father' of all the historic imams of all the Shiʿi communities. So dense is the exchange between God and the Imam, from a sentence to another, that we know who speaks, God or the Imam and these sermons can be described as 'theo-imamosophical'. In a long succession of declarations, in an incessant hammering of resonant prose, which is said to have induced a collective trance in his auditors, the first imam boldly affirms his identity with the cosmic *Anthropos*, the Perfect Man, who, to quote Massignon, is not divinity made human but humanity made divine.[4] To give some idea of the content of these texts, I will give a only a few examples here, but will return to them in greater detail in the second part: 'I am the Secret of secrets, I am the Guide of the Heavens, I am the *First* and the *Last*, I am the *Apparent* and the *Hidden*, I am the *Compassionate*, I am the Face of God, I am the Hand of God, I am the Archetype of the Book, I am the Cause of causes ... [the terms in italics are Quranic names of God].'

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3   Apart from the now classic works on Muslim mysticism that include more or less full discussions of the Perfect Man (e.g. works by Nicholson, Asin Palacios, Massignon, Arberry, Anawati-Gardet, Ritter, Schimmel, Corbin, Izutsu ...), there are listed below some monographs containing particularly interesting elements: H.H. Schaeder, 'Die islamische Lehre vom Vollkommenen Menschen', *ZDMG*, 79 (1925), pp. 192-268 (partially translated into Arabic by ʿA.R. Badawī, see below); L. Massignon, 'L'Homme Parfait en Islam et son originalité eschatologique', *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 15 (1948), pp. 287-314 (now in *Opera Minora* [Paris, 1969], vol. 1, pp. 107-25); partially translated into Arabic by ʿA.R. Badawī in *al-Insān al-kāmil fī l-Islām*, Cairo, 1950; R. Arnaldez, 'al-Insān al-Kāmil', *EI2*, vol. 3, pp. 1271-1273; W.M. Watt, 'Created in His Image: A Study of Islamic Theology', *Transactions of Glasgow University Oriental Society*, 18 (1959-1960), pp. 36-49; G.C. Anawati, 'Le nom suprême de Dieu (*Ism Allāh al-Aʿẓam*)', *Atti del Terzo Congresso di Studi Arabi e Islamici*, Naples, 1967; M. Takeshita, *Ibn Arabi's Theory of the Perfect Man and its Place in the History of Islamic Thought*, Tokyo, 1987; Ph. Gignoux, '*Imago Dei*: de la théologie nestorienne à Ibn al-ʿArabi', in Ph. Gignoux (ed.), *Recurrent Patterns in Iranian Religions: From Mazdaism to Sufism, Studia Iranica*, Cahier 11 (Paris, 1992), pp. 13-27; B. Radtke's book, *The Concept of wilāya in Early Sufism*, London, 1993, includes valuable information on the earliest developments of the notion in mystical milieus; and now see Lory, P. & Terrier, M., "*al-Insān al-kāmil*: l'Homme parfait dans la culture arabe classique", in H. Touati (ed.), *Encyclopédie de l'humanisme méditerranéen*, Brill, 2017, online: http://encyclopedie-humanisme.com/?Al-insan-al-kamil-248. Many contributions in *L'ésotérisme shiʿite, ses racines et ses prolongements* (footnote 2) also refer to our subject.

4   L. Massignon, 'L'Homme Parfait en Islam', *Opera Minora*, vol. 1, pp. 109-110.

Some specialists have pointed out the late date of the composition of these sermons,[5] and from the sixth/twelfth century onwards, many Imami scholars considered them to belong to 'extremist' Shi'ism (the *ghuluww* movement)[6] and excluded them from Twelver doctrine, considered to be 'moderate'. It does indeed seem conceivable that these sermons are apocryphal, both because of their length and because the philosophical and astronomical terms which appear in most of them proves the late date of their final versions.

In this first section therefore, I by no means seek to establish their authenticity, but simply to show that, on the one hand, similar speeches sermons appeared from an early period in the Shi'i-'Alid milieu (perhaps because, in some 'Alid circles, the messianic figure of 'Alī was present from the earliest days of Islam) and that, on the other hand, Twelver imamological doctrine documented in early compilations of *ḥadīth*s is compatible with this conception of the Imam as well as because these compilations include texts that could be considered to be early steps on the way to the sermons in question. Even although it is true, as Corbin stresses, that: 'Even if the sermon was not in reality pronounced by the first imam ... it was, at a given moment [preached] by an eternal Imam, in the Shi'i consciousness, and it is this that matters from

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5   'A.Ḥ. Zarrīnkūb, *Arzesh-e mīrāth-e ṣūfiyye*, Tehran, 1343 Sh./1965, pp. 281-282; K.M. al-Shaybī, *al-Fikr al-shī'ī wa l-naza'āt al-ṣūfiyya*, 2nd ed, Baghdad, 1395/1975, pp. 253-254; among traditionalist scholars, Sayyid Muṣṭafā Āl Ḥaydar, *Bishārat al-Muṣṭafā*, Tehran, n.d., pp. 75 f., 214 f.; Ja'far al-'Āmilī, *Dirāsa fī 'alāmāt al-ẓuhūr*, Qumm, 1411/1990, pp. 110 f. The arguments advanced by F. Sezgin, who tends to consider the entire text of one of these sermons (the *khuṭbat al-bayān*) as historically authentic, are not supported by the texts and are far from convincing, F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, vol. 4, Leiden, 1971, p. 22. Let us recall that from al-Ma'mūn's time (r. 198-218/813-833), nearly two hundred sermons attributed to 'Alī were in circulation and this number rapidly doubled, see L. Veccia Vaglieri, 'Sul *Naǧ al-balāġah* e sul suo compilatore ash-Sharīf ar-Raḍī', *AIUON*, special issue (1958), pp. 7 f.

6   See the introduction by Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī (d. 1259/1843) to his *Sharḥ al-khuṭbat al-taṭanjiyya*, Tabriz, 1270/1853. It is true that, beginning with the earliest heresiographical treatises, the divinisation of the imam becomes one of the regular accusations levelled against 'extremist' Shi'is (see M.G. Hodgson 'Ghulāt', *EI2*, vol. 2, pp. 1,119-1,121; also W. al-Qāḍī, 'The Development of the Term *Ghulāt* in Muslim Literature with Special Reference to the Kaysāniyya', in A. Dietrich (ed.), *Akten des VII. Kongresses für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft*, Göttingen, 1976, pp. 295-319, esp. pp. 299 f. and 306 f.). Neither the *Nahj al-balāgha*, compiled by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1016), nor the *Biḥār al-anwār* by Majlisī II (d. 1111/1699), contain all theo-imamosophical sermons. The main reason for such silence on the matter, must be the division of the Twelvers, after the major occultation of the twelfth imam (ca. 329/940-941), into two distinct currents both in the nature and 'vision of the world': the original 'non-rational esoteric' trend and the much later 'theologico-legal rational' trend. The second, now predominant and in the majority, often accused the first of 'literalism' (*ḥashw*) and 'extremism' (*ghuluww*); regarding this subject see *Guide divin*, pp. 15-58.

a phenomenological point of view,[7] it remains no less true that the origin and development of the notion of the Imam-God in Imami Shi'ism has a history which deserves consideration. As a result, for the early period of Shi'ism, named 'proto-Shi'ism' by Watt,[8] the distinction between extremist and moderate Shi'ism proves to be completely artificial.[9]

2   First Textual References

The glorification of ʿAlī by his supporters is a process which transformed the historical individual into a semi-legendary figure of tragic and heroic proportions; it harks back to a very early period, since the first signs of it may be traced to the moment immediately following ʿAlī's assassination if not earlier, the time when he would have been considered the Messiah by some or to the period just after he failed to succeed the Prophet. Early on, this personality acquired cosmic dimensions: the archetypal Imam, manifestation of a primordial Light proceeding from divine Light, a theophanic entity.[10] He passed his qualities on to other imams of his progeny, and even to their initiates. Indeed, heresiographers record that, in the course of the first three centuries of Islam, many Shi'i sects and movements believed one or another imam or such and such a follower to be the Locus of Manifestation (*maẓhar*) of God.[11] The oldest

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7   H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien. Aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, Paris, 1971, vol. 1, p. 96, n. 64.

8   W.M. Wyatt *Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh, 1973), under 'proto-Shi-ism'.

9   *Guide divin*, pp. 313-316. I have studied the issue many times from different angles. See now "Les Imams et les Ghulāt. Nouvelles réflexions sur les relations entre imamisme 'modéré' et shi'isme 'extrémiste'", in *Shi'i Studies Review*.

10   Cf. E. Kohlberg, 'Some Imāmī Shīʿī Views on the *ṣaḥāba*', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 5 (1984), pp. 145-146 (rpr. in *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shīʿism* [Aldershot, 1991], article IX); Gh. Ḥ. Ṣadīqī, *Jonbesh-hā-ye dīnī-ye īrānī dar qarn-hā-ye dovvom va sevvom-e hejrī* (augmented and updated version of the author's thesis, Gh.H. Sadighi, *Les mouvements religieux iraniens aux IIᵉ et IIIᵉ siècles de l'hégire* [Paris, 1938]), Tehran, 1372 Sh./1993, pp. 225f.; *Guide divin*, pp. 75f. See also here chapters 2 and 3.

11   It is worth pointing out that, contrary to the accusations levelled by the heresiographers, especially the Sunnis, no Shi'i sect, even the most 'extremist', seems to have claimed that the 'Locus of Manifestation' was God in Essence. For all Shi'is, at the level of Essence, God is absolutely ineffable and unknowable. This forms the very theological foundation of imamology; we shall return to this important matter. There is thus no question of divinisation by incarnation but by theophanic participation, the mode of participation differing according to the 'Locus of Manifestation' preferred by the sect. Cf. L. Massignon, 'Salmân Pâk et les prémices spirituelles de l'Islam iranien', *Société d'Études Iraniennes*, 7 (1934) (rpr. *Opera Minora*, vol. 1, pp. 443-483, esp. pp. 467-472 = *Ecrits mémorables*, éd.

of these sects seems to have been the enigmatic Saba'iyya,[12] some of whose doctrines were probably identical to those of the Kaysāniyya,[13] who were supporters of the imamate of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, and very likely the first Shi'is whose thought tended towards gnosticism. Thus, a Kaysānite proclamation, dating from 278/890-891 and recorded by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) in his *Ta'rīkh*, appears to be the oldest written evidence of this type of sermon in an 'Alid milieu.[14] Two Nuṣayrī texts which, according to Silvester de Sacy and Massignon, date to the late third century AH, include fragments of these two sermons, the *Bayān* and *Taṭanjiyya* (see section 2 below) and the Jābirian corpus (second half of the third to the early fourth century AH) contains a quote from the first.[15] In the early fourth century, these records grew in number. Some fragments are recorded by the Twelver Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Kashshī[16] and

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C. Jambet *et al.*, Paris, 2009, vol. 2, pp. 576 ff.). For these Shi'i sects see the list by 'A. Eqbāl, *Khānedān-e Nawbakhtī*, Tehran, 1311 Sh./1933, pp. 249-267.

12   Supporters of the enigmatic 'Abd Allāh b. Saba'; see M.G. Hodgson, "Abd Allāh b. Saba", *EI2*.

13   Cf. J. van Ess, 'Das *Kitāb al-irjā'* des Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya', *Arabica*, 21 (1974) and 22 (1975), esp. 1974, pp. 31 f.

14   Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa l-mulūk*, ed. M.A.F. Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1960, *sub anno* 278, vol. 10, pp. 25-26. According to al-Ṭabarī, the Kaysānid declaration comes from a Qarmaṭī document.

15   A.I. Silvestre de Sacy, *Chrestomathie arabe*, Paris, 1806, vol. 2, p. 83; L. Massignon, 'L'Homme Parfait en Islam', *Opera Minora*, pp. 122-123; the two Nuṣayrī texts are: 1) one that de Sacy calls 'the catechism of the Nuṣayrīs' in MS 5188 (Collection de Sacy), BN Paris, fol. 95 f. and 2) *Kitāb al-hidāya al-kubrā*, Beirut, 1406/1986 by the Nuṣayrī leader Abū 'Abd Allāh (b.) Ḥusayn b. Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī (d. 346/957 or 358/969), quoted by Massignon in 'L'Homme Parfait', p. 123. The Nuṣayrī *majmū'a* (MS Arabic 1450, BN, Paris) contains a text attributed to al-Mufaḍḍal b. 'Umar al-Ju'fī (famous disciple of the sixth and seventh imams) on 'Alī's divinity; this text is of a later period and dates from the seventh/thirteenth c. See M.M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, 'The Nuṣayrī Doctrine of 'Alī's Divinity and the Nuṣayrī Trinity According to an Unpublished Treatise from the 7th/13th Century', *Der Islam*, 72/2 (1995), pp. 258-292 – now see their *The Nuṣayrī-'Alawī Religion: An Enquiry into its Theology and Liturgy*, Leiden, 2002. On this manuscript see also Cl. Huart, 'La poésie religieuse des nosaïris', *JA*, 14 (1879), pp. 241-248; L. Massignon, 'Esquisse d'une bibliographie nuṣayrie', in *Mélanges syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud*, Paris, 1939, pp. 913-922 = *Opera Minora*, vol. 1, pp. 640-649; and now a series of studies by M.M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky like 'A Tenth Century Nuṣayrī Treatise on the Duty to Know the Mystery of Divinity', *BSOAS*, 58 (1995), pp. 243-250 – and then published in *The Nuṣayrī-'Alawī Religion*; see above. For the corpus of Jābir see *Kitāb al-usṭuqus al-uss al-thānī*, in E.J. Holmyard (ed.), *The Arabic Works of Jābir b. Ḥayyān*, Paris, 1928, pp. 79-96, quotation p. 89. For the dating of this corpus see P. Lory, *Jābir b. Ḥayyān, Dix Traités d'alchimie. Les dix premiers Traités du Livre des Soixante-Dix*, Paris, 1983, pp. 34-51.

16   Al-Kashshī, *Ma'rifat akhbār al-rijāl*, Bombay, 1317/1899, p. 138 (notice on Ma'rūf b. Kharrabūdh who traces the chain of transmission for the sayings of 'Alī to imam

certain phrases of the 'eschatological prophecies' (*malāḥim*) which appear at the beginning of some versions of the *khuṭbat al-bayān* are the subject of a satirical pastiche by the anonymous author of *Abū l-Qāsim*,[17] and some appear in al-Maqdisī's *Badʾ*,[18] which at least goes to show that the early nucleus of what would later become these sermons was known before 350/960. The second half of the third to the first half of the fourth centuries is also the period of the editing of all the first major compilations of the Twelver tradition.[19] These compilations are still strongly influenced by what I have elsewhere called the early 'non-rational esoteric tradition',[20] 'recuperating' a good number of the traditions of other Shiʿi movements (Kaysānī, Ismaʿīli, Wāqifī, etc.) and including them in their own.[21] This monumental corpus does not contain any of the sermons that interest us here, but does include texts which, in a fashion, clearly predict them. They are probably of non-Twelver Shiʿi origin but, taking the broad view, they are compatible with Twelver imamology. Indeed, at this 'mythical' stage of doctrinal language, when conceptual thinking is practically absent and abstract philosophical terminology is only in its initial stages; and when the conceptual distinction between the human nature (*nāsūt*) of

Muḥammad al-Bāqir [d. ca. 119/737]); see also al-Māmaqānī, *Tanqīḥ al-maqāl*, 3 vols, Tehran, 1349/1930, vol. 3, p. 227.

17   Edited by A. Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams*, Heidelberg, 1922; rpr. Hildesheim, 1968, ch. 5, pp. 57 f. On *malḥama*, pl. *malāḥim*, see the article 'Malāḥim' by D.B. MacDonald in *EI2*.

18   Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-badʾ wa l-taʾrīkh* (*Le Livre de la Création et de l'Histoire*), ed. and French trans. by Cl. Huart, 6 vols, Paris, 1899-1919, vol. 2, p. 174 and vol. 5, p. 136. For other, later sources concerning those sermons see *infra*, the third part.

19   Regarding these compilations and their authors see e.g. E. Kohlberg, 'Shīʿī Hadīth', in A.F.L. Beeston et al. (eds), *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 299-307, esp. pp. 303-306; *Guide divin*, pp. 48-58 (*Divine Guide*, pp. 19-22); the authors of 3d/9th and 4th/10th c. we will call upon most here include: al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, Furāt b. Ibrāhīm al-Kūfī (an author with obvious Zaydī sympathies but claimed by the Imamis; for more on him see M.M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shiism* [Leiden and Jerusalem, 1999], pp. 29-32 et passim), ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, Muḥammad b. Masʿūd al-ʿAyyāshī, Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya al-Ṣadūq. Regarding the sources of these compilations see now H. Ansari, *L'imamat et l'Occultation selon l'imamisme. Étude bibliographique et histoire des textes*, Leiden-Boston, 2017.

20   Cf. above note 5 *in fine*.

21   J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*, Berlin and New York, 1990, vol. 1, pp. 306 f. (on the eschatological notion of 'return to life' – *rajʿa* – see also E. Kohlberg, *EI2*); M.A. Amir-Moezzi, 'Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummî (d. 290/902-3), *JA*, 280, 3-4 (1992), pp. 232 f. (on the notion of occultation – *ghayba* –, the number of imams and their identity, as well as other information about the *Qāʾim*, the eschatological Saviour).

the imam and his divine one (*lāhūt*)[22] is not yet clearly established in Shi'i communities, an entire process of doctrinal development was required before imamology would culminate in the figure of the Imam-God. So it is by adopting a phenomenological perspective that we will try to identify the successive phases of this development.

According to Imami theology, the Divine Being, in his Essence, absolutely transcends all imagination, intelligence or thought. In his Essence, his Absolute Being, God remains the inconceivable Transcendent who can only be described or apprehended in the terms by which He describes Himself through His revelations. At this level, the word 'thing' (*shay'*), an absolutely neutral term, can be applied to God. According to sayings attributed to many of the imams, God is the reality of 'thing-ness' (*shay'iyya*), unintelligible and indefinable (*ghayr ma'qūl wa lā maḥdūd*), which places Him outside the two limits of agnosticism (*ta'ṭīl*) and assimilationism (*tashbīh*).[23] The Essence of God is *the* Thing about which man can only speak in negative terms, refusing any conceivable representation of Him. Indeed, in all the theological traditions, the words of the imams about God are a whole series of negatives: negation of any body or form (*jism/ṣūra*),[24] negation of space (*makān*), of time (*zamān*), of immobility (*sukūn*) and of movement (*ḥaraka*), of descent (*nuzūl*) and ascent (*ṣu'ūd*), of description (*tawṣīf*) and of representation (*tamthīl*), and so on.[25]

However, had things remained thus, God would have been eternally and absolutely beyond the reach of man, and theology would have been mere agnosticism. So God, in his infinite mercy, wished to make himself known to his creatures and had Himself described by a certain number of Names and Attributes. Now these, revealed to man as the Most Beautiful Names of God (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*), bear Loci of Manifestation, Vehicles and Organs applicable to all of creation in general and to humanity in particular. It is thanks to

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22 Cf. R. Arnaldez, 'Lāhūt and Nāsūt', *EI2*.

23 Cf. e.g. al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, ed. J. Muṣṭafawī, with Persian trans., 4 vols, Tehran, (n.d. [4th vol., tr. H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī, dates from 1386/1966]), 'Kitāb al-tawḥīd', 'Bāb iṭlāq bi-annahu shay'', vol. 1, pp. 109 f.; Ibn Bābūya, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, ed. H. al-Ḥusaynī al-Ṭihrānī, Tehran, 1398/1978, ch. 7 'Bāb annahu tabārak wa ta'ālā shay'', pp. 104 f. On the application of the term 'thing' to God in Muslim theology in general see D. Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*, Paris, 1988, pp. 142-150.

24 Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl*, 'Bāb al-nahy 'ani l-jism wa l-ṣūra', vol. 1, pp. 140 f.; Ibn Bābūya, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, ch. 6 ('Bāb annahu 'azza wa jall laysa bi-jism wa lā ṣūra'), pp. 97 f.

25 Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl*, 'Bāb al-ḥaraka wa l-intiqāl', vol. 1, pp. 169 f.; Ibn Bābūya, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, ch. 28 ('Bāb nafy al-makān wa l-zamān wa l-sukūn wa l-ḥaraka wa l-nuzūl'), pp. 173 f.; ch. 2 ('Bāb al-tawḥīd wa nafy al-tashbīh'), pp. 31 f.; Ibn Bābūya, *'Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, ed. M.Ḥ. Lājevardī, Tehran, 1378/1958, ch. 11 ('Bāb fī ... al-tawḥīd'), pp. 114 f.; Ibn Bābūya, *Kitāb al-khiṣāl*, ed. 'A.A. Ghaffārī, Qumm, 1403/1984, p. 2.

these theophanic Organs that God relates to men and they in turn gain access to what is knowable in Him.[26] One can thus distinguish two ontological levels of the Divine Being: firstly, that of Essence, indescribable, inconceivable; the level of the Unknowable, of God in his vertiginous, unmanifested concealment. Secondly, the level of Names and Attributes, which is also that of Acts undertaken by the Organs of God; this is the level of the revealed God, of the Unknown wishing to be known.[27] And in all the written corpus, the imams tirelessly repeat that they are the Vehicles for the Attributes, the Organs of God. Applying their spiritual hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*) to Quranic terminology they constantly say:

> We are the Eye (*'ayn*) of God, we are the Hand (*yad*) of God, we are the Face (*wajh*) of God, we are His Side (*janb*), His Heart (*qalb*), His Tongue (*lisān*), His Ear (*udhn*).[28]

It is to stress this aspect of God that the imam is also known by names such as 'the Proof of God' (*ḥujjat Allāh*), 'the Vicar of God' (*khalīfat Allāh*), 'the Path of God' (*ṣirāṭ Allāh*), 'the Threshold of God' (*bāb Allāh*) and is described in the Quran by expressions such as 'the Greatest Sign' (*al-āyat al-kubrā*, Q 79:20), 'the Exalted Symbol' (*al-mathal al-a'lā*, Q 16:60), 'the Most Secure Handle' (*al-'urwa al-wuthqā*, Q 2:256 or 31:22).[29] Commenting on the Quranic verse 7:180, 'To God belong the Names Most Beautiful; so call Him by them', the sixth imam, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), is said to have declared:

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26 On apophatic theology and the notion of theophany as one of its consequences, esp. in the gnostic milieu, see H. Corbin, *Le paradoxe du monothéisme*, Paris, 1981, esp. the first section; H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. 4, index, under '*tanzîh*' and 'théophanies'.

27 On the Names and Attributes in general, see al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl*, vol. 1, pp. 143 f.; Ibn Bābūya, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, ch. 11, pp. 139 ff.

28 Obviously here one has the ontological Imam, the Cosmic Man, Locus of the Manifestation of God, of whom the historical imam is in turn the manifestation on the perceptible level. See e.g. al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, ed. Mīrzā Kūchebāghī, 2nd ed, Tabriz, (n.d. [editor's introduction is dated 1380/1960]), section 2, ch. 3, pp. 61-64 and ch. 4, pp. 64-66 (commentaries on the term *wajh* in the Quran); al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl*, 'Kitāb al-tawḥīd', 'Bāb al-nawādir', vol. 1, p. 196; 'Kitāb al-ḥujja', 'Bāb jāmi' fī faḍl al-imām wa ṣifātihi', vol. 1, pp. 283 f.; Ibn Bābūya, *Tawḥīd*, ch. 12, pp. 149 f. (commentary on 'All things perish, except His Face', Quran, 28:88), ch. 22, pp. 164 f. (ma'nā janb Allāh), ch. 24, pp. 167 f. (ma'nā l-'ayn wa l-udhn wa l-lisān), id., *'Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, pp. 114-116 and 149-153 and *Kamāl al-dīn*, ed. 'A.A. Ghaffarī, Qumm, 1405/1985, ch. 22, vol. 1, pp. 231 f.

29 For example, al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, section 2, ch. 3, pp. 16-17; Ibn Bābūya, *al-Amālī*, ed. and Persian trans. by M.B. Kamare'ī, Tehran, 1404/1984, 'majlis' 9, no. 9, p. 35, 'majlis' 10, no. 6, pp. 38-39.

> By God, we [the imams], are the Most Beautiful Names; no action by a devoted servant is accepted by God, if it is not accompanied by knowledge of us.[30]

In this distinction between Essence and Names as theophanic Organs, one sees, in Shi'i beliefs, a transposition, at the level of the divine, of the separation of all reality into two aspects: *bāṭin* (esoteric, hidden) and *ẓāhir* (exoteric, apparent). The esoteric, hidden, unmanifested aspect of God would thus be his Essence, forever inaccessible; His Organs, Vehicle of his Names, would constitute His exoteric or revealed aspect. The Imam, exoteric facet of God, is thus the veritable *Deus Revelatus*; knowledge of his reality is equivalent to the knowledge of what is knowable in God. In a tradition going back to the third imam al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī (61/680) one reads: 'O Mankind! God created His servants so that they may know Him, for when they know Him, they worship Him and free themselves from the worship of all else except of Him.' Someone then asks the imam: 'What is knowledge of God?' And the reply: 'For people of every period, it is knowledge of the imam [of their time] to whom they owe obedience.'[31]

The aim of creation is thus to reveal the Creator to his creatures; the Imam as theophanic being is the 'Supreme Symbol' of what can be known of God, and therefore is himself the reason for and the purpose of creation. 'He who knows us knows God, and he who knows us not, knows not God,' the imams repeat.[32] 'It is thanks to us that God is known', says a tradition dating back to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, 'and thanks to us that He is worshipped.'[33] 'Without God, we

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30   '*Naḥnu wa llāhi al-asmā al-ḥusnā allatī lā yaqbalu llāh min al-'ibād 'amalan illā bi-ma'rifatinā*'; al-'Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr*, ed. H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī, Tehran, n.d., vol. 2, p. 42, no. 119; al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl*, 'Kitāb al-tawḥīd', 'Bāb al-nawādir', vol. 1, p. 196.

31   '*Ayyuhā l-nās inna llāha jalla dhikruhu mā khalaqa l-'ibād illā li ya'rifūhu fa-idhā 'arafūhu 'abadūhu fa-'idhā 'abadūhu staghnau bi-'ibādatihi 'an 'ibāda man siwāh faqāla lahu rajul fa-mā ma'rifat Allāh qāla marifa ahl kulli zamān imāmahum alladhī yajibu alayhim ṭā'atuhu*', Ibn Bābūya, *'Ilal al-sharā'i'*, Najaf, 1385/1966, ch. 9 "illa khalq al-khalq', p. 9, no. 1. It must always be borne in mind that, according to Twelver doctrine, each prophet-legislator is accompanied in his mission by one or more imams whose mission is to initiate the elite of believers in the esoteric aspect of the prophetic Message (see *Guide divin*, pp. 96-112). The imams have thus been present among humanity all throughout history.

32   '*Man 'arafanā faqad 'arafa llāh wa man ankaranā faqad ankara llāh*', e.g. Ṣaffār, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, section 1, ch. 3, p. 6; Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl al-dīn*, ch. 24, p. 261, no. 7; *Nahj al-balāgha* (note 5 above), ed. and Persian trans. by 'A.N. Fayḍ al-Islām, 4th ed, Tehran, 1351 Sh./1972, p. 470.

33   '*Binā 'ubida llāh ... wa law lanā mā 'ubida llāh*', Ibn Bābūya, *Tawḥīd*, ch. 12, p. 152, no. 9 *in fine*.

would not be known, and without us, God would not be known,' adds another tradition attributed to the same sixth imam.[34]

Another, comparable, saying, also attributed to Jaʿfar, takes another step into the development of the doctrine of the imam's divinity. This step is illustrated by some allusive sayings comparable to the famous 'paradoxical utterances' (*shaṭaḥāt*) of the mystics:[35]

> God made us His Eye among his worshippers, his Eloquent Tongue among His Creatures, His Hand of benevolence and mercy extended over His servants, His Face thanks to which one is guided towards Him, His Threshold that leads to Him, His Treasure in the heavens and on earth … It is by our act of worship that God is worshipped, without us God could not be worshipped.[36]

Now this last sentence can also be read as follows: 'It is because we [the imams] are worshipped that God is worshipped; without us, God could not be worshipped (*bi-ʿibādatinā ʿubida llāh law lā naḥnu mā ʿubida llāh*).' This rather audacious ambiguity seems deliberate, for not only does the identification of God with the person of the imam seem to be the logical, final outcome of

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34   *'Law lā Allāh mā ʿurifnā wa law lā naḥnu mā ʿurifa llāh'*, Ibn Bābūya, *Tawḥīd*, ch. 41, p. 290, no. 10.

35   These are utterances in which 'God speaks in the first person in the words of a mystic often in a state of ecstasy', such as 'I am the Truth' by Ḥallāj or 'Glory to me' by Basṭāmī; regarding *shaṭḥ*, see e.g. L. Massignon in *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane*, Paris, 1922, index *s.v.* and *La Passion de Hallāj, martyr mystique de l'Islam*, 4 vols, rpr. Paris, 1975, see index under '*shaṭḥ*'; H. Corbin's introduction to Rūzbehān Baqlī Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ-e shaṭḥiyyāt*, ed. H. Corbin and M. Moʿīn, Paris and Tehran, 1966; rpr. 2004; also ʿA.R. Badawī, *Shaṭaḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 3rd ed, (Kuwait, 1978); P. Nwiya, *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique*, Beirut, 1970, index under '*shaṭḥ*'. As we shall see further, some mystics did not hesitate to consider ʿAlī's sermons the quintessential 'paradoxical utterances'. It nevertheless seems to me that the similarity between the paradoxical pronouncements of the imams and the *shaṭaḥāt* of the Sufis are only formal, since the premises and conclusions of each of these currents of thought, as well as the theology which underpins them, are different. The subject is much too complex to be treated with here; for analysis on the nature of *shaṭḥ*, see C. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, New York, 1985; P. Lory, 'Les paradoxes mystiques (*shatahât*) dans la tradition soufie des premiers siècles', *Annuaire de l'EPHE, Sciences Religieuses*, 102 (1994-1995) and 103 (1995-1996); P. Ballanfat, 'Réflexions sur la nature du paradoxe. La définition de Rûzbehân Baqlî Shîrâzî', *Kâr Nâmeh*, 2-3 (1995), pp. 25-40.

36   *'Wa jaʿalanā ʿaynahu fī ʿibādihi wa lisānahu l-nāṭiq fī khalqih wa yadahu l-mabsūṭa ʿalā ʿibādihi bi-l-raʾfa wa l-raḥma wa wajhahu lladhī yuʾtā minhu wa bābahu lladhī yadullu ʿalayhi wa khazā inahu fī samāʾihi wa arḍih … bi-ʿibādatinā ʿubida llāh lā law naḥnu mā ʿubida llāh'*, Ibn Bābūya, *Tawḥīd*, ch. 12, pp. 151-152, no. 8.

the previous phases of imamology, but other *shaṭaḥāt* of the same tenor are widespread in the early corpus.[37] A remarkable fact is that all these sayings, or at least those that we have been able to find, seem to be attributed to the same imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq.[38] Commenting on the Quranic verse 39:69, 'And the earth shall shine with the light of its Lord', Jaʿfar says: 'The Lord of the earth is the Imam of the earth.'[39] A disciple asks the sixth imam to explain the meaning of the verse, 'and when you threw [the remark is addressed to the Prophet] it was not yourself that threw, but God that threw' (Q 8:17). Jaʿfar is said to have replied: 'It is because it was ʿAlī who gave the darts to the Messenger of God who threw them.'[40] Finally, a dialogue between the same imam and his disciple Abū Baṣīr is highly significant in this regard:

> The Disciple: 'Tell me if on the Day of Resurrection, the initiates[41] will be able to see God.' Jaʿfar: 'Yes, but they will have already seen Him well before the advent of this Day.' 'When?' 'When He asked them: "Am I not your Lord" and they replied, "Yes [Q 7:172]".' Then, reports the disciple,

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37   This process of disseminating of particularly delicate doctrinal elements occurs regularly in the early corpus; it is one aspect of the Shiʿi obligation 'to preserve or guard a secret' (*taqiyya, kitmān, khabʾ*) and for the first time in the works of Jābir, it seems to have been called 'the process of the deliberate dissemination of information' (*tabdīd al-ʿilm*, literally: 'scattering of knowl edge'); cf. *Guide divin*, index under '*tabdīd al-ʿilm*'; on its usage in the Jabirian corpus whose Shiʿi allegiance is no longer in question, see P. Kraus, *Jābir b. Ḥayyān. Contribution à l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'islam*, Cairo, 1942; rpr. Paris, 1986, vol. 1, pp. xxvii-xxx; P. Lory, *Dix Traités d'alchimie. Les dix premiers Traités du Livre des Soixante-Dix*, Paris, 1983, pp. 53 and 242f.; H. Corbin, *Alchimie comme art hiératique*, Paris, 1986, pp. 183-184 and n. 84 (tr. of 'Livre du Glorieux' by 'Jābir'). On Shiʿi *taqiyya* in general, consult chapter 7 in this book.

38   Which corroborates the status of 'founder' that Muslim gnosis generally (Sufism, theosophy, the occult sciences etc.) reserves for imam Jaʿfar; regarding this subject, see e.g. J. Ruska, *Arabische Alchemisten*, vol. 2: *Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, der Sechste Imam*, Heidelberg, 1924; P. Kraus, *Jābir b. Ḥayyān*; J.B. Taylor, 'Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, Spiritual Forebear of the Sufis', *Islamic Culture* (1966); T. Fahd, 'Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq et la tradition scientifique arabe', in *Le Shīʿisme imāmite*, Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 6-9 May 1968 (Paris, 1970).

39   '*Rabb al-arḍ yaʿnī imām al-arḍ*', ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Ṭ. al-Mūsawī al-Jazāʾirī, Najaf, 1386-87/1966-68; rpr. Beirut, 1411/1991, vol. 2, p. 256.

40   '*ʿAlī nāwala rasūl Allāh al-qabḍa llatī ramā bihā*', al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 52, nos 32-34.

41   '*al-muʾminūn*' literally 'the believers'; in technical Twelver terminology, the term *muʾmin* means a Shiʿi initiated by the imam into the esoteric dimension of the faith and is contrasted with the term *muslim* (literally 'one who submits'), which in the same context, designates he who submits to the exoteric aspect of the faith; see my analysis, 'Etude du lexique technique de l'ésotérisme imāmite', *Annuaire de l'EPHE, section des sciences religieuses*, 102 (1994-1995), p. 215, also Id., *La Preuve de Dieu. La mystique shiʿite à travers l'œuvre de Kulaynī (9e-10e siècle)*, Paris, 2018, index *s.v.*

the master remained silent for a long time before declaring: 'The initiates already see Him in this world before the Day of Resurrection. *Do you not see Him at this very moment* [*before you*]?' 'May I serve you as a ransom, can I speak of this teaching with your approval?' 'No, for a negator unaware of the deeper meaning of these words will use them to accuse us of assimilationism and unbelief.'[42]

In such an imamological context, it is not surprising to encounter traditions in the early Twelver corpus that unambiguously attribute to ʿAlī theo-imamosophical sermons where his identity switches constantly between a divine nature (*lāhūt*) and a human nature (*nāsūt*):

From the heights of the pulpit in the mosque at Kūfa, ʿAlī, Commander of the initiates, declared: 'By God, I am the Rewarder (*dayyān*) of men the Day of Rewarding; I am he who assigns the Garden or the Fire, no one enters without my designation; I am the Great Judge [between good and evil; *al-fārūq al-akbar*] … I hold the decisive Word (*faṣl al-khiṭāb*); I hold the penetrating Insight into the Path of the Book … I have learnt the science of fortune and misfortune; and the science of judgements; by me the Finality of Religion; I am the deed of Kindness enacted by God for His creatures.'[43]

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42   Abū Baṣīr: '*Akhbirnī ʿani llāh ʿazza wa jall hal yarāhu l-muʾminūn yawm al-qiyāma qāla naʿam wa qad raʾawhu qabla yawm al-qiyāma fa-qultu matā qāla ḥīna qāla lahum a lastu bi-rabbikum qālū balā thumma sakata sāʿatan thumma qāla wa inna l-muʾminīn la-yarawnahu fī l-dunyā qabla yawm al-qiyāma a lasta tarāhu fī waqtika hādhā faqultu lahu juʿiltu fidāk fa-uḥaddithu bi-hādhā ʿanka fa-qāla lā fa-innaka idhā ḥaddathta bihi fa-ankarahu munkirun jāhil bi-maʿnā mā taqūluhu thumma qaddara ʿalaynā anna dhālika tashbīh wa kufr*', Ibn Bābūya, *Tawḥīd*, ch. 8, p. 117, no. 20. Cf. *Guide divin*, p. 141, note 277; in *A Shiʿite Anthology*, New York, 1981, p. 42, W. Chittick provides a translation of this tradition without pointing out the 'paradoxical words' that it contains. It should be noted that this tradition is not reported by an "extremist" author but by Ibn Bābūya al-Ṣadūq, who is considered by some to be the leader of the "moderate" Shiʾis. Regarding Jaʿfar's three disciples with the *kunya* Abū Baṣīr, see *Guide divin*, p. 87, note 182 and p. 117. This concern regarding the incomprehension of non-initiates is constantly present in the early corpus; see e.g. al-Kulaynī, *al-Rawḍa min al-Kāfī*, ed. and Persian trans. by H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī, Tehran, 1386/1969, vol. 1, p. 81; Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 23, pp. 254-255 no. 4, *ʿIlal al-sharāʾiʿ*, ch. 7, pp. 5 f. and *ʿUyūn*, vol. 26, no. 22, pp. 262 f. (*ḥadīth faḍl al-nabī wa l-ḥujaj ʿalā l-malāʾika*), where matters are repeatedly stressed in order to avoid confusion between 'the Proofs of God' and God – I have translated excerpts from this extensive tradition in *Guide divin*, pp. 89-91 (*Divine Guide*, pp. 35-36).

43   '*Wa llāhi innī la-dayyān al-nās yawm al-dīn wa qasīm al-janna wa l-nār lā yadkhuluhā l-dakhīl illā ʿalā iḥdā qismī wa innī l-fārūq al-akbar … li-faṣl al-khiṭāb wa baṣartu sabīl al-kitāb … wa ʿalimtu ʿilm al-manāyā wa l-balāyā wa l-qaḍāyā wa bi-kamāl al-dīn wa anā*

And elsewhere:

> I am the Queen Bee (*yaʿsūb*) of the initiates; I am the First of the first believers; I am the successor to the Messenger of the Lord of the worlds; I am the Judge of the Garden and the Fire.[44]

In a tradition that goes back to the Prophet Muḥammad, he is said to have praised ʿAlī thus:

> Here is the most radiant Imam, tallest lance of God, the greatest Threshold of God; whosoever longs for God, let him enter through this Threshold ... Without ʿAlī, truth would not be distinguished from falsehood, nor believer from unbeliever; without ʿAlī, it would not have been possible to worship God ... no Curtain (*sitr*) hides God from him, no Veil (*ḥijāb*) lies between God and him! For ʿAlī himself is the Curtain and Veil.[45]

On the verses, 'Of what do they question one another? / Of the solemn tiding / whereon they are at variance' (Q 78:1-3), ʿAlī is said to have declared to his followers:

> By God, I am the solemn Tiding ... God has no more solemn Tiding, nor greater Sign, than me.[46]

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l-niʿmat llatī anʿama llāhu ʿalā khalqih', Furāt b. Ibrāhīm al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Kāẓim, Tehran, 1410/1990, p. 178, no. 230. One will notice the Christ-like and messianic nature of the attributes that ʿAlī attributes to himself in this hadith (see above chapter 2, footnotes 77 to 85 and afferent texts). Furthermore, the last sentence is a hermeneutical reference to verse 5:3. On the double nature of ʿAlī among Nuṣayri Shiʿis see now M.M. Bar-Asher, "*Al-Risāla al-Rāstbāshiyya* d'Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī, élaborateur de la religion nuṣayrite", *Shiʿi Studies Review* 2 (2018), pp. 228-254 (in particular pp. 243-247).

44 'Anā yaʿsūb al-muʾminīn wa anā awwal al-sābiqīn wa khalīfa rasūl rabb al-ʿālamīn wa anā qasīm al-janna wa l-nār', al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, pp. 17-18, no. 42; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 3, p. 389. On ʿAlī as 'Leader' or 'Commander of the Bees' (*amīr al-naḥl*), see I. Goldziher, 'Schiʿitisches', ZDMG, 44 (1910), pp. 532-533, re-issued in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. J. de Somogyi, Hildesheim, 1967-1970, vol. 5, pp. 213-214.

45 'Hādhā l-imām al-aẓhar wa rumḥu llāh al-aṭwal wa bābu llāh al-akbar fa-man arāda llāh fa-l-yadkhul min al-bāb ... law lā ʿAlī mā abāna l-ḥaqq min al-bāṭil wa lā muʾmin min kāfir wa mā ʿubida llāh ... lā yasturuhu min Allāh sitr wa lā yaḥjibuhu ʿani llāh ḥijāb bal huwa l-ḥijāb wa l-sitr', Fūrāt b. Ibrāhīm, *Tafsīr*, p. 371, no. 503.

46 'Anā wa llāh al-nabaʾ al-ʿaẓīm ... wa llāhi mā li llāh nabaʾ aʿẓam minnī wa lā li-llāh āya aʿẓam minnī', ibid., pp. 533-534, nos 685-686. As might be realised, the notion of 'Man (in general) in the image of God' does not exist in Imami Shiʿism. In any case, the radically

Without exception, all these quotations are drawn from the Twelver corpus said to be 'moderate'; as we have noted before, the distinction between moderate and extremist Shi'ism, at least during the early period and especially in the 'esoteric non-rational' tradition, proves to be artificial.[47] This distinction seems

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dualist Shi'i vision that divides all creatures, thus humans as well, into 'beings of Light' and 'beings of Darkness', designated in various ways, renders such a conception impossible (on Twelver dualism, see *Guide divin*, pp. 91 f. and *La religion discrete*, Chapter 8). The famous tradition 'God created Adam in his image' (*khalaqa llahū Ādam 'alā ṣūratih*) has no special importance in the early corpus and in the words of the imams is interpreted in two ways that are perfectly 'orthodox', in keeping with the view of Sunni theologians:

a) the attribution (*iḍāfa*) of 'image' (*ṣūra*, lit. 'form') to God is interpreted in the same general sense as the attribution of the Ka'ba to Him when He calls it 'My House' (*baytī*) or the attribution of all created things to Him as being His work (cf. Twelver interpretation: al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, 'Kitāb al-tawḥīd', 'Bāb al-rūḥ', vol. 1, p. 182; Ibn Bābūya, *Tawḥīd*, vol. 6, p. 103, no. 18. cf. Sunni interpretation: Ibn Khuzayma, *K. al-tawḥīd*, ed. M.Kh. Harrās, Cairo, 1388/1968, p. 39; al-Juwaynī, *al-Shāmil fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. A.S. al-Nashshār, B.F. 'Awn and S.M. Mukhtār, Alexandria, 1389/1969, p. 561; Ibn Fūrak, *Mushkil al-ḥadīth*, ed. M.M. 'Alī, Cairo, 1979, p. 57 and ed. D. Gimaret (Damascus, 2003), pp. 21 f.)

b) the possessive adjective 'his' does not refer to God, but to a particular individual mentioned in some versions of the tradition. According to these versions, the Prophet meets a person who slaps another or humiliates him by making an insulting remark about his physical appearance; the Prophet then intervenes and says: 'Do not do that because God created Adam in his (i.e. the humiliated person's) image', meaning that all men are made in image of Adam 'the father of humanity'. For the Twelver interpretation see Ibn Bābūya, *Tawḥīd*, ch. 12, p. 152, no. 10. Sunni interpretation: Ibn Khuzayma, *K. al-tawḥīd*, pp. 36-38; al-Juwaynī, *al-Shāmil*, p. 560; al-Juwaynī, *K. al-irshād*, ed. J.D. Luciani, Paris, 1938, p. 93; see also W.M. Watt, 'Created in His Image'. For Sunni sources, see M. Takeshita, *Ibn Arabi's Theory of the Perfect Man*, p. 16, n. 2 and p. 29, n. 58 (information provided by Daniel Gimaret, to whom I am most grateful)   .

On the other hand, one can say without fear of extrapolation that in Shi'ism the Imam is made in the image of God and that the adept initiated to the esoteric doctrine has been made in the image of the Imam (on the ontological and anthroposophical function of initiation see *Guide divin*, pp. 75-95 and 174-199 [*Divine Guide*, pp. 29-38 and 69-79]; also M.A. Amir-Moezzi, 'Réflexions sur une évolution du Shi'isme duodécimain: tradition et idéologisation', in *Les Retours aux Écritures. Fondamentalismes présents et passés*, ed. E. Patlagean and A. Le Boulluec, Louvain and Paris, 1993, pp. 63-81 and esp. pp. 63-69). Thus, the Imam – exoteric Face of God – as we have seen, is at the same time the esoteric Face of the initiated faithful.

47   Cf. note 8 above and the related text. One may conclude, as does H. Modarressi, that these kinds of tradition were current in the entourage of the imams, among the Mufawwiḍa or even the 'extremist' Ṭayyāra (cf. H. Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shī'ite Islam: Abū Ja'far ibn Qiba al-Rāzī and his Contribution to Imāmite Shī'ite Thought* [Princeton, 1993], esp. pp. 21 f.); still, the 'moderate' corpus contains a large number of these traditions and enables the development of a 'supra-rational' imamology. In this regard, comments by the famous contemporary Imami scholar, 'Abdallāh

to have been made later, mainly by the first heresiographers at the end of the third century and the beginning of the fourth century AH. In 'proto-Shiʿism', the boundaries between different trends seem to have been more permeable and the movement of followers between different sects, and even their simultaneous membership of several, would have been common practice.

3   The Sermons of ʿAlī

There is great confusion over the titles and texts of the sermons recorded by various authors in different periods. A large majority of these writers are Shiʿis, others are Sunni mystics. Sometimes the same title is given to different sermons, at others, almost identical texts are called by different names; sometimes, versions of the same sermon differ greatly, the length of the text varies substantially and in general, the more one advances in time, the more the texts are embellished and interwoven. It is as if the authors, in the same sonorous prose style and according to their own particular spiritual or literary attitudes, are adding increasingly numerous affirmations to earlier, simpler texts.

From the most recurrent material, one could say that we have at or disposal three theo-imamosophical sermons attributed to ʿAlī, each closely related to each other: the Sermon of the Clear Decla ration (*khuṭbat al-bayān*), the Sermon of Glory (*khuṭbat al-iftikhār*) and the Sermon of the Gulf (*al-khuṭba al-taṭanjiyya/ṭatanjiyya/ ṭaṭanjiyya*, an enigmatic word which one passage of the text explains as being synonymous with *khalīj*, in the sense of 'gulf').[48]

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al-Māmaqānī (d. 1932) in his *Tanqīḥ al-maqāl* (cf. note 15 above) are highly significant: 'We have stated on many occasions that the accusations of extremism levelled by the early [scholars] (*al-qudamāʾ*) do not deserve to be taken into consideration since many aspects that are essential to Imami doctrine (*ḍarūriyyāt al-madhhab*) were held by them to be extremist' (*Tanqīḥ*, vol. 1, p. 349).

48   Regarding these three sermons, H. Corbin has contributed partial translations, interpretations and additional information (see *En Islam iranien*, index *s.v.*). There is a *ḥadīth*, and not a sermon, attributed to ʿAlī on the human and divine nature of the imām; this *ḥadīth* is related to our sermons and is reported by Rajab al-Bursī (cf. below). On this tradition see H. Corbin, 'La gnose islamique dans le recueil de traditions (*Mashāriq al-anwār*) de Rajab Borsi', *Annuaire de l'EPHE, section des sciences religieuses* (1968-1969, 1969-1970), rpr. in *Itinéraire d'un enseignement*, Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, Tehran, 1993, pp. 104f. and 111f.; T. Lawson, 'The Dawning Places of the Lights of Certainty in the Divine Secrets Connected with the Commander of the Faithful by Rajab Bursī', in *The Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism*, ed. L. Lewisohn, London and New York, 1992, pp. 267-269. In general, the *Mashāriq* by al-Bursī contains many sayings of the same nature attributed to ʿAlī (see here chapter 8).

The last one appears to be the oldest, since, as we have seen, quite a long version was already recorded in Nuṣayrī texts of the end of the third century AH.[49] The Ismaili thinker and propagandist Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1077) records a more elaborate version in his *Majālis*.[50] The Twelver theosopher and traditionist, Rajab al-Bursī (d. 814/1411), in his *Mashāriq*, records more or less the same text as al-Shīrāzī, although according to other authors, elements from the Sermon of Clear Declaration are included there.[51] Al-Bursī's version was used not only by Mullā Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680) in his *Kalimāt maknūna*, but also by al-Sayyid Kāẓim al-Rashtī (d. 1259/1843), grand master of the theologico-mystical School of the Shaykhiyya, in his monumental unfinished commentary on the Sermon of the Gulf,[52] as well as by an Imami scholar who died in the early twentieth century, ʿAlī Yazdī Ḥāʾirī, in his *Ilzām al-nāṣib*.[53]

The Sermon of Glory may well have been of Twelver origin; in fact it was only recorded in its more elaborate version by authors belonging to this branch of Shiʿism. It appears that this sermon was first recorded under this title by the great scholar Ibn Shahrāshūb (d. 588/1192) in his *Manāqib*.[54] In his *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*,[55] the mystical thinker Ḥaydar Āmolī/Āmulī (d. ca. 790/1387-1388) quoted excerpts (which in other authors' works are included in one of the other two sermons that concern us here). Rajab al-Bursī, a contemporary of Āmolī, records a sermon under this same title which is significantly different.[56]

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49   Cf. note 14 above and the relevant text.

50   Al-Muʾayyad fī l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *al-Majālis al-Muʾayyadiyya*, ed. M. Ghālib, vols 1 and 3, Beirut, 1974 and 1984, vol. 1, pp. 171-173.

51   Al-Ḥāfiẓ Rajab al-Bursī, *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn*, 10th ed, Beirut, n.d., pp. 166-170; see also note 47 above. An English translation of a substantial portion of the Sermon of the Gulf, as it appears in Bursī, is provided by T. Lawson in his article mentioned above (note 47), pp. 269-270. Now also consult a partial French translation of Bursī's work, by H. Corbin entitled *Les Orients des Lumières*, Paris and Lagrasse, 1996 (tr., ed. and finished by P. Lory). According to Āghā Bozorg al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa ilā taṣānīf al-shīʿa*, 25 vols, Tehran and Najaf, 1353-1398/1934-1978, vol. 7, pp. 198-199, this sermon is the same as the Sermon of the Climes (*khuṭbat al-aqālīm*) partially reported by Ibn Shahrāshūb (d. 588/1192) in his *Manāqib*.

52   Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Kalimāt maknūna*, ed. ʿA. ʿUṭāridī Qūchānī, Tehran, 1383/1963, pp. 167-168 and 196 ff. Texts studied by T. Lawson in 'The Hidden Words of Fayḍ Kāshānī', in M. Szuppe (ed.), *Iran: Questions et connaissances*, vol. 2, 'Périodes médiévale et moderne', Paris, 2002, pp. 427-447, esp. pp. 438-439. Al-Sayyid Kāẓim al-Rashtī, *Sharḥ al-khuṭba al-taṭanjiyya*, Tabriz, 1270/1853.

53   ʿAlī al-Yazdī al-Ḥāʾirī, *Ilzām al-nāṣib fī ithbāt al-ḥujja al-ghāʾib*, Isfahan, 1351/1932; rpr. Tehran, n.d., pp. 212-214.

54   Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, ed. M. Burūjirdī, Tehran, 1316-1317/1898-1899, pp. 71-72.

55   Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmolī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār wa manbaʿ al-anwār*, ed. H. Corbin and O. Yahia, Tehran and Paris, 1969, pp. 10-11 and 111-112.

56   Rajab al-Bursī, *Mashāriq anwār*, pp. 164-166.

The erudite Shaykh Āghā Bozorg Ṭihrānī (d. 1969), unrivalled connoisseur of Twelver texts, opines that the Sermons of Glory and Clear Declaration belong to the same original text, of which yet another part, in this case called the Sermon of Silhouettes (*khuṭbat al-ashbāḥ*) is recorded in the *Nahj al-balāgha*.[57]

The Sermon of the Clear Declaration (or rather several texts with this title), itself also deriving from an earlier nucleus, seems to be the most recorded of these three sermons, and the most read, meditated and commented upon both by Shiʿi theosophers and Sunni mystics.[58] Some texts dating possibly from the second half of the third century and more certainly from the early fourth century AH, which contain quotations from this sermon, have already been mentioned.[59] It seems there is a (lost?) commentary on it by the great figure of Iranian Ismailism, Ḥasan (b.) al-Ṣabbāḥ (d. 518/1124).[60] Of Sunni mystics with some Shiʿi sympathies, two, Muḥammad b. Ṭalḥa al-Ḥalabī al-Shāfiʿī (d. 652/1254) and Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh (d. 869/1464), recorded excerpts from this sermon and considered them to be 'exemplary ecstatic utterances'.[61] Twelver authors who studied the *khuṭbat al-bayān*, quoted it, commented on it, translated it into Persian or versified it in Arabic or Persian, are far too numerous to be listed here. Let us instead mention a few famous individuals: Ḥaydar Āmolī and Rajab al-Bursī, both mentioned above; al-Qāḍī Saʿīd al-Qummī (d. ca. 1103/1691-1692); Nūr ʿAlī Shāh (d. 1212/1798) master of the Niʿmatullāhī order; Jaʿfar Kashfī (d. 1267/1850-1851) (we will return to Kashfī's version); Mīrzā Abū l-Qāsim Rāz Shīrāzī, master of the Dhahabiyya order (d. 1286/1869) and Yazdī Ḥāʾirī, cited earlier, who in his *Ilzām al-nāṣib*, records three very long versions of this sermon.[62]

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57 Āghā Bozorg al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 7, pp. 198 f.

58 The *khuṭbat al-bayān* is often part of an 'eschatological prophecy' (*malḥama*, pl. *malāḥim*; see the article by D.B. MacDonald cited above in note 16) attributed to ʿAlī. It was analysed and partially translated by L. Massignon in his article on the Perfect Man (see footnote 3 above). The text used by Massignon is reproduced, based on MS 2661, BN, Paris, fols. 21b-24a, by ʿA.R. Badawī in *al-Insān al-kāmil*, pp. 139-143. The beginning of the text is almost identical to excerpts from the *khuṭbat al-iftikhār* reported by Ḥaydar Āmolī.

59 Cf. above, notes 14 to 17 and the related texts.

60 Khayrkhāh-i Harātī, *Kalām-i pīr. A Treatise on Ismaili Doctrine*, ed. and tr. W. Ivanow, Bombay, 1935, pp. 79-81 of the Persian text.

61 Muḥammad b. Ṭalḥa al-Ḥalabī, *al-Durr al-munaẓẓam fī l-sirr al-aʿẓam*, n.p., 1331/1912, pp. 83-85, also cited by al-Qundūzī, *Yanābīʿ al-mawadda*, Najaf, 1384/1965, pp. 112-113; Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh, *al-Risālat al-iʿtiqādiyya*, ed. M. Molé in *Professions de foi de deux kubrâwîs: ʿAlî-i Hamadânî et Muḥammad Nûrbakhsh*, BEO, 17 (1961-1962), p. 193 of the Arabic text; see also M. Molé, 'Les kubrâwiyya entre sunnisme et Shiʿisme aux 8e et 9e s. de l'hégire', REI (1961), p. 129.

62 Ḥaydar Āmolī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, pp. 382, 411 and in the same volume *Naqd al-nuqūd fī maʿrifat al-wujūd*, p. 676; Rajab al-Bursī, *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn*, pp. 170-172 (the author does not provide the title of the sermon); al-Qāḍī Saʿīd al-Qummī, 'Sharḥ ḥadīth al-ghamāma', in

Of these, the version of the Iranian theosopher Jaʿfar Kashfī's is especially interesting.[63] In commenting on it in his major work, *Tuḥfat al-mulūk*, dedicated to the Qājār prince Muḥammad Taqī Mīrzā, a son of Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh (hence the title that literally means 'the Gift offered to Sovereigns'), Kashfī records the Arabic text of a relatively short sermon which he calls *khuṭbat al-bayān*. Indeed, a substantial portion of the text is a kind of medley of previous versions of this sermon. But Kashfī also adds a number of elements drawn from two of the other sermons, the *khuṭba al-taṭanjiyya* and the *khuṭbat al-iftikhār*. And he deletes the theological introduction (*dībāja*) which listed some of the Names and Works of God, as well as the 'eschatological prophecy' (*malḥama*) from the beginning of the *khuṭbat al-bayān*, no doubt considering them irrelevant to the main thrust of the sermon, which, according to him, is imamological. There is a particularly interesting fact here: although he was a philosopher and a very keen student of astronomy, Kashfī nonetheless deleted assertions of an overly philosophical nature or those that relate to astronomy – assertions which had been added later to an early nucleus. In this way the Iranian thinker achieves a coherent synthesis of the three sermons and creates a text that might well be

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Kitāb al-arbaʿīniyyāt, cited by H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. 4, pp. 152 f. (see also Corbin, *Itinéraire d'un enseignement*, pp. 96 f.); see now al-Qāḍī Saʿīd al-Qummī, *al-Arbaʿīniyyāt li-kashf anwār al-qudsiyyāt*, ed. N. Ḥabībī, Tehran, 1381 Sh./2003, pp. 38 ff.; Nūr ʿAlī Shāh, 'Manẓūm-e khuṭbat al-bayān', in *Dīvān-e Nūr ʿAlī Shāh Iṣfahānī*, Tehran, 1349 Sh./1970 and in *Majmūʿe-ye āthār-e Nūr ʿAlī Shāh Iṣfahānī*, Tehran, 1350 Sh./1971; Jaʿfar Kashfī, *Tuḥfat al-mulūk*, 2 vols (lithograph, Iran, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 20-28; Abu l-Qāsim Rāz Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ kitāb khuṭbat al-bayān* (sic, instead of *Kitāb sharḥ khuṭbat al-bayān*), Shiraz, n.d.; al-Yazdī al-Ḥāʾirī, *Ilzām al-nāṣib*, pp. 193-211. For other authors see al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 7, pp. 200-201 and vol. 13, pp. 218-219. For an alchemical hermeneutical reading of the *khuṭbat al-bayān* by Aydamur Jaldakī (d. 750/1349-1350 or 761/1360-1361), see H. Corbin, *Alchimie comme art hiératique*, ed. P. Lory, Paris, 1986, ch. 1.

63 On Sayyid Jaʿfar b. Abī Isḥāq al-ʿAlawī al-Mūsawī al-Dārābī al-Burūjirdī called 'al-Kashfī' see Muḥammad ʿAlī Mudarris, *Rayḥānat al-adab*, Tabriz, n.d., vol. 3, p. 366, no. 568; H. Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, Paris, 1986 (a volume containing both sections of the work otherwise published separately in 1964 and 1974), esp. pp. 487-489 and *Face de Dieu, Face de l'Homme*, Paris, 1983, pp. 345-358; S.A. Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, Chicago, 1984, pp. 225 f.; M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shiʿi Islam. The History and Doctrine of Twelver Shiʿism*, Oxford, 1985, pp. 194 f. On al-Kashfī's work, see also H. Corbin, 'Cosmogonie et herméneutique dans l'œuvre de Sayyed Jaʿfar Kashfī', *Annuaire EPHE* (1970-1971) (rpr. in *Itinéraire d'un enseignement*, pp. 125-129). Not unlike a number of other theosophers, al-Kashfī's affiliation with the Uṣūliyya is linked to a late development within this movement. This gradual acceptance of an esoteric and theosophical hermeneutics of Imamism seems to have been a development that began in the early seventeenth century; it awaits further study, but see now S. Rizvi, "Shiʿi Political Theology and Esotericism in Qajar Iran. The Case of Sayyid Jaʿfar Kashfī" in M.A. Amir-Moezzi *et al.* (eds), *L'ésotérisme shiʿite*, pp. 687-712.

close to one of several early theo-imamosophical sermons. For these reasons Ja'far Kashfī's version seems to me to be especially representative of the type of text attributed to 'Alī:[64]

> From the top of the pulpit in the mosque at Kūfa, 'Alī, Commander of the initiates, delivered this sermon: 'People! Question me before you lose me![65] For I am the Treasurer of Knowledge;[66] I am the Mountain of magnanimity;[67] I hold the Keys of the Unknown; I am the Mystery of the Unknown; I am the Mystery of Mysteries;[68] I am the Tree of Lights; I am the Guide of the Heavens; I am the One who is intimate with those who praise God; I am the intimate friend of Gabriel; I am the pure Chosen One of Michael; I am the Conductor of Thunder; I am the Witness of the Pact;[69] I am the Face of God; I am the Eye of God; I am the Hand of God;

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64 Ja'far Kashfī, *Tuḥfat al-mulūk*, 2 vols (lithograph, Iran, n.d.); this edition offers some variations as compared to the lithograph edition (riddled with errors of all kinds), produced in one volume in-folio (Iran, 1276/1859-1860). The abridged (one ought to say censured) version of the *Tuḥfat al-mulūk* which appeared fairly recently (Tehran, n.d. [ca. 1980s]) does not contain the text of the sermon; it should be noted that more than half of the content of the old editions of the work has been left out of this new edition. I have not here translated the author's comments in Persian. The terms in italics are Quranic Names of God. The Arabic text of this sermon is provided at the end of the present chapter.

65 'The pulpit in the mosque at Kufa' and this first sentence are *topoï* attributed to 'Alī; the *minbar* in the mosque at Kūfa, his capital, is the favoured site for sermons by the first imam. The sentence is a direct allusion to the fact that 'Alī is held to be the wise, initiated one and thus the ideal source of knowledge.

66 'Treasurer of Knowledge' is a recurring title often given to the imams; see *Guide divin*, index, under '*khâzin, khuzzân, khazana*'.

67 *Ḥilm*, crucial virtue of tribal ethics, is practically impossible to render in translation by one word, according to Ch. Pellat it ranges from 'serene justice to balance, forbearance and lenience encompassing self-control and the dignity of good order', cf. *EI2* (French version), vol. 3, p. 403.

68 The identity of the speaker shifts, from one affirmation to another, between, on the one hand, the historical imam, manifestation on the perceptible level of the ontological Imam and guardian of the divine Mystery, and on the other hand, the ontological Imam, the Revealed God and thus the content of this Mystery; this type of attribute is also applicable to the Messiah, divine man in the biblical and mostly Christian sense if not more: man as locus of manifestation of God.

69 Reference either to what is traditionally called 'the primordial Covenant' (*mīthāq*; cf. Q 7:172), or to the Pact ('*ahd*) concluded between God and Adam (Q 20:115). On the Imami conception of the *mīthāq*, see *Guide divin*, index under '*mithâq, mawâthîq*', and M.A. Amir-Moezzi, 'Cosmogony and Cosmology in Twelver Shi'ism', *EIr*, vol. 6, pp. 317-322; on the Imami version of Q 20:115, see *Guide divin*, p. 212 (*Divine Guide*, p. 85) and M.M. Bar-Asher, 'Variant Readings and Additions of the Imāmī-Šī'a to the Quran', *Israel Oriental Studies*, 13 (1993), p. 64.

I am the Tongue of God;[70] I am the Light of God;[71] I am the Treasure of God in the heavens and on the earth;[72] I am the Power; I am the Manifestation of [or He who manifests] the Power; I am the Rewarder (*dayyān*)[73] on the Day of Rewards; I am the Judge of the Garden and Fire; I am the Garden and the Fire; I am the Two-horned One [*Dhū l-qarnayn*; cf. Q 18:83, 86 and 94] of the ancient scriptures; I am the First Adam; I am the First Noah; I am Noah's Companion and Saviour; I am the Companion of Job the tested, and his Healer; I am the Companion of Abraham and his Secret;[74] I am the Commander of the Initiates; I am the Source of Certitude; I am the Thunder; I am the Cry for Truth [Q 23:41 and 50:42]; I am the Hour for the naysayers [a recurring Quranic expression]; I am the Call that brings forth the entombed; I am the Lord of the Day of Resurrection; I am he who has raised up the Heavens; I am the Proof of God on earth and in the heavens; I am the Light of guidance; I am the Most Beautiful Names by which one invokes Him; I am the Overseer of the deeds of all creatures; I am, with them, the Vicegerent of God the Creator; I am the Lord of the First Creation;[75] I am the Lord who released the first Flood; I am the Lord of the second Flood; I am with the Calamus and I was before the Calamus [Q 68:1 and 96:4]; I am with the [Well-Preserved] Tablet and I was before the [Well-Preserved] Tablet [Q 85:22]; I am the Lord of primordial pre-eternity; I was the Steward (*mudabbir*)[76] of the primordial Universe when neither your heaven nor earth had come into being; I am He who in pre-existence, concluded the Pact with the spirits and He who declared to them, by the commandment of the Eternal: "Am I not your Lord?" [Q 7:172]; I am the Leader of the initiates, I am the Standard of the well-guided; I am the Guide of the Pious; I am the Certitude; I am

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70   On these assertions refer above to the first part and note 27.

71   On the Imam as Light of God, see *Guide divin*, under '*nûr*' and 'Cosmogony and Cosmology', *EIr*, vol. 6, as well as the seminal article by U. Rubin, 'Pre-existence and Light. Aspects of the Concept of Nūr Muḥammad', *Israel Oriental Studies*, 5 (1975).

72   Compare with the assertion, 'I am the Treasurer'; the historical imam is the Treasurer par excellence of the divine Treasure, whereas the ontological cosmic Imam is its actual content (cf. note 67 above).

73   Although it does not appear in the Quran, this Name is generally considered to be one of the Divine Names; see D. Gimaret, *Les noms divins*, esp. pp. 350-351.

74   I believe this is an allusion to the Imami belief according to which the Imam, as Light, physically and spiritually accompanies the prophets and imams through the sacred history of humanity; cf. *Guide divin*, pp. 96-112 (Adamic Humanity: the 'voyage' of Light).

75   On the many creations, see *Guide divin*, p. 101, note 201 (*Divine Guide*, p. 40).

76   Same remarks as footnote 72, cf. D. Gimaret, *Les noms divins*, esp. p. 326.

the one who speaks by divine revelation;[77] I am the Governor of the stars and their Steward by the commandment of my Lord and through the science He reserved for me; I am he who will spread justice and equality on earth just as before it overflowed with oppression and injustice [or 'darkness'];[78] I am the one Concealed, the Awaited for the Spectacular Affair; I am the Sinai, the inscribed Book, the inhabited Dwelling; the Elevated Firmament; the brimming Sea [Q 52:1-6]; I am the Master of Hermeneutics [of the Sacred Book]; I am the Commentator of the Gospels; I am the Scholar of the Torah; I am the Archetype of the Book [Q 3:7; 13:39; 43:41]; I am the Decisive Word [Q 38:20]; I am the *First*, I am the *Last*, I am the *Hidden*, I am the *Manifest*; I am the Light of the prophets;[79] I am the Friendship of the Friends [of God]; I am Adam and Seth; I am Moses and Joshua; I am Jesus and Simon [Peter];[80] I am Ḥanbathā' (?) of the Blacks; I am Bashīr (?) of the Turks; I am Jirjīs (?) of the Franks;[81] I am the one who Illuminates the sun, the moon and the stars; I am the Recorder of the Resurrection; I am the Riser of the Hour; I am *The Creator*, I am the Created; I am the Contemplator; I am the Contemplated; I am the *Lord of the Kaʿba*, I am the month of Ramaḍān; I am the Night of Destiny [Q 97:1-3] I am *He who gives* (*muʿṭī*); I am *He who takes* (*qābiḍ*); I am the Interior of the Sacred Space; I am the Pillar of the People; I am the Light of lights; I am the Bearer of the [divine] Throne with the Devoted [angels?];[82] I am the Pearl of the Oysters; I am the Mountain of Qāf;[83] I am the Key of Invisible; I am the Lamp of

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77   On the imam receiving inspiration (*ilhām*) and divine revelation (*waḥy*) and the modalities of the latter, see *Guide divin*, pp. 176f. (*Divine Guide*, pp. 70 ff.) and here chapter 7.

78   Time-honoured expression for the advent of the *Qāʾim/Mahdī*, the eschatological Saviour, at the End of Time. In this case, as in the following affirmation, there is an identification with the Shiʿi *Mahdī*, the hidden imam; are we dealing with remnants of the figure of ʿAlī as the eschatological Saviour?

79   Here, as in the following assertions, an allusion is made to the ontological Imam as Light transmitted from prophet to prophet and imam to imam; on this complex notion consult the studies mentioned above in notes 70 and 73; see also U. Rubin, 'Prophets and Progenitors in Early Shiʿa Tradition', *JSAI*, 5 (1984).

80   On the initiatory lineage of the prophets and their imams, see *Guide divin*, pp. 102 f., esp. p. 107 ('spiritual genealogy') (*Divine Guide*, p. 40 and esp. 41).

81   These names apparently mean the prophets of 'the peoples' mentioned. Remember that *beshir* means 'prophet' in Turkish (from the Arabic *bashīr*, 'herald of good news') and that Jirjīs generally refers to Saint George, cf. Carra de Vaux, 'Djirdjīs', *EI2*.

82   On the imams as 'Bearers of the Divine Throne' (*ḥamalat al-ʿarsh*), see *Guide divin*, index under 'ʿarsh'.

83   On the 'psycho-cosmical' Mountain of Qāf, see the analyses by H. Corbin in *Corps spirituel et Terre céleste. De l'Iran mazdéen à l'Iran Shiʿite*, Paris, 1979, index under 'Qāf'.

Hearts;[84] I am the Splendour of all Beauty [or 'intelligence' or 'metallic vessel,' *ẓurūf*];[85] I am the Secret of the Letters; I am the meaning of the *ṭawāsīn*;[86] I am the esoteric dimension of the *ḥawāmīm*; I am the Lord of the *alif-lām-mīm*; I am the *nūn* and the Calamus [Q 68:1]; I am the Lamp [in] Darkness; I am He who makes firm the lofty mountains; I am He who makes the sources of water rise; I am He who makes the rain fall; I am He who enables the leaves to grow; I am He who makes the colours burst forth and fruit ripen; I am the Bestower of nourishment; I am the Resurrector of the dead; I am he for whom the sun returned twice on its trajectory and he whom the sun saluted twice;[87] And I am He who prayed with the Messenger of God towards the *Qiblatayn*;[88] I am the Hero [of the Battles] of Badr and Ḥunayn;[89] I am He who enabled Moses to cross the sea; I am He who drowned the Pharaoh and his armies; I am He who spoke from the lips of Jesus while he was still in the cradle; I am He who speaks all languages;[90] I am He who traverses the seven heavens and the seven earths in the blink of an eye;[91] I am the *Mahdī* of all moments; I am the Christ; I am the second Christ; I am the Jesus of this Time;[92] I am the Master of the Balance;[93] I am the *Compassionate*, I am the *Merciful*; I am the *High*; I am the *Most High*; I am the Queen Bee of the initiates;[94] I am

84   On the Imam as 'Light of the heart', see *Guide divin*, pp. 112 f. (*Divine Guide*, pp. 44 f.).

85   Kashfī interprets the term as 'beauty in all that is beautiful' (*jamāl-e har jamīl*), *Tuḥfat al-mulūk*, vol. 1, p. 26.

86   An allusion, as in the following two allusions to the separated letters that feature at the head of certain suras of the Quran.

87   An allusion to a miracle by ʿAlī (*radd al-shams*), famous in the tradition; see e.g. *Guide divin*, p. 231 (*Divine Guide*, p. 92), and esp. the monograph by L. Capezzone, 'Un miracolo di ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib: i versi attribuiti ad al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī e il modello storiografico delle fonti relative al *radd al-šams*', in *In memoria di Francesco Gabrieli (1904-1996)*, *RSO*, 71, supp. 2 (1997), pp. 99-112. This miracle of course evokes the biblical miracle of Joshua, the imam of Moses according to Shiʿism.

88   According to the tradition, Jerusalem (original direction for prayer at the beginning of Muḥammad's mission) and Mecca.

89   See e.g. H. Laoust, 'Le rôle de ʿAlî dans la *Sîra* chiite', *REI*, 30/1 (1962), pp. 7-26.

90   See e.g. al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, section 7, chs 11-16, pp. 333-354 (knowledge of all languages, the language of the various holy books, the language of the birds, of wild beasts and the 'metamorphosed' – *al-musūkh*).

91   For example, al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, section 8, chs 12-15, pp. 397-409.

92   See above chapter 2 (on the identification of ʿAlī with Jesus as the Messiah).

93   On the identification of the cosmic Balance with the Imam in general and ʿAlī in particular, see e.g. ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, ed. al-Mūsawī al-Jazāʾirī, Najaf, 1386-1387/1966-1968, vol. 2, p. 354 (commentary by al-Riḍā on Q 55:7-9).

94   On the symbolism of the bees and honey as representative of Shiʿi initiates and the initiatory teaching of the imams respectively, see e.g. al-Majlisī, *Mirʾāt al-ʿuqūl*, Tehran,

the Certitude of those who know with certitude; I am the Lion of the sons of Banū Ghālib; I am ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.'[95]

1404/1984, vol. 9, p. 170; for other references, see E. Kohlberg, 'Taqiyya in Shīʿī Theology and Religion', pp. 358-59, n. 74; see also note 43 above.

95 Text of *khuṭbat al-bayān* (version by Jaʿfar Kashfī): *Ayyuhā l-nās asʾalūnī qabla an tafqidūnī innī khāzin al-ʿilm wa anā ṭūr al-ḥilm/ ʿindī mafātīḥ al-ghayb wa anā sirr al-ghayb/anā sirr al-asrār/anā shajarat al-anwār/anā dalīl al-samāwāt/anā anīs al-musabbiḥāt/anā khalīl Jabraʾīl/anā ṣafī Mīkāʾīl/anā sāʾiq al-raʿd/anā shāhid al-ʿahd/ ana wajh Allāh/anā ʿayn Allāh/anā yad Allāh/ anā lisān Allāh/anā nūr Allāh/anā kanz Allāh fī l-samāwāt wa fī l-arḍ/anā l-qudra/ anā maẓhar [muẓhir] al-qudra fī l-arḍ/anā dayyān yawm al-dīn/anā qasīm al-janna wa l-nār/anā l-janna wa l-nār/anā Dhū l-Qarnayn al-madhkūr fī l-ṣuḥuf al-ūlā/anā Ādam al-awwal/anā Nūḥ al-awwal/ anā ṣāḥib Nūḥ wa munjīhi/anā ṣāḥib Ayyūb wa shāfīhi/anā ṣāḥib Ibrāhīm wa sirruh/ anā amīr al-muʾminīn/anā ʿayn al-yaqīn/anā l-raʿd/anā l-ṣayḥa bi-l-ḥaqq/anā l-sāʿa li l-mukadhdhibīn/anā l-nidāʾ al-mukhrij man fī l-qubūr/anā ṣāḥib yawm al-nushūr/ anā aqimtu l-samāwāt/anā ḥujjat Allāh fī l-arḍ wa l-samāwāt/anā nūr al-hudā/anā l-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā allatī yudʿa bihā/anā l-nāẓir ʿalā aʿmāl al-khalāʾiq/anā fī l-khalāʾiq khalīfat al-ilāh al-khāliq/anā ṣāḥib al-khalq al-awwal/anā ṣāḥib al-ṭūfān al-awwal/ anā ṣāḥib al-ṭūfān al-thānī/anā maʿa l-qalam qabl al-qalam/anā maʿa l-lawḥ qabla l-lawḥ/anā ṣāḥib al-azaliyyat al-awwaliyya/anā mudabbir al-ʿālam ḥīna lā samāʾukum hādhihi wa lā ghabrāʾukum/anā ākhidh al-ʿahd ʿalā l-arwāḥ fī l-azal/wa anā l-munādī lahum ʾalastu bi-rabbikum bi-amri qayyūm lam yazal/anā sayyid al-muʾminīn/anā ʿalam al-muhtadīn/anā imām al-muttaqīn/anā l-yaqīn/anā l-mutakallim bi-l-waḥy/anā ṣāḥib al-nujūm wa mudabbiruhā bi-amri rabbī wa ʿilmī lladhī khaṣṣanī bihi/anā lladhī amlaʾa l-arḍ ʿadlan wa qisṭan kamā muliʾat jawran wa ẓulman [ẓuluman]/anā l-ghāʾib l-muntaẓar li l-amr al-ʿaẓīm/anā l-ṭūr wa kitāb masṭūr wa l-bayt al-maʿmūr wa l-saqf al-marfūʿ wa l-baḥr al-masjūr/anā muʾawwil al-taʾwīl/anā mufassir al-injīl/anā ʿālim al-tawrā/anā umm al-kitāb/anā faṣl al-khiṭāb/anā al-awwal/anā al-ākhir/anā l-bāṭin/anā l-ẓāhir/anā nūr al-anbiyāʾ/anā walāyat al-awliyāʾ/anā Ādam wa Shīth/anā Mūsā wa Yūshaʿ/anā ʿĪsā wa Shamʿūn/anā Ḥanbathāʾ [?] al-Zanj/anā Bashīr [?] al-Turk/anā Jirjīs al-Faranj/anā munawwir al-shams wa l-qamar wa l-nujūm/anā qayyim al-qiyāma/anā qayyim al-sāʿa/ anā l-khāliq/anā l-makhlūq/anā l-shāhid/anā l-mashhūd/anā ṣāḥib al-Kaʿba/anā shahr Ramaḍān/anā laylat al-qadr/anā l-muʿṭī/anā l-qābiḍ/anā bāṭin al-ḥaram/anā ʿimād al-umam/anā nūr al-anwār/anā ḥāmil al-ʿarsh maʿa l-abrār/anā luʾluʾ al-aṣdāf/anā jabal Qāf/anā miftāḥ al-ghuyūb/anā sirāj al-qulūb/anā nūr al-ẓurūf/anā sirr al-ḥurūf/ anā maʿnā l-ṭawāsīn/anā bāṭin al-ḥawāmīm/anā ṣāḥib alif-lām-mīm/anā l-nūn wa l-qalam/ anā miṣbāḥ al-ẓulam/anā rāsī l-jibāl al-shāmikhāt/anā fājir al-ʿuyūn al-jāriyāt/ anā munzil al-maṭar/anā mūriq al-shajar/anā mukhrij al-lawn wa l-thamar/anā muqaddir al-aqwāt/anā nāshir al-amwāt/anā lladhī raddat lī al-shams marratayn wa sallamat ʿalayya karratayn/wa sallaytu maʿa rasūl Allāh al-qiblatayn/anā ṣāḥib Badr wa Ḥunayn/ anā jāwaztu bi-Mūsā fī l-baḥr/wa aghraqtu Firʿawn wa junūdahu/ anā l-mutakallim ʿalā lisān ʿĪsā fī l-mahd/anā l-mutakallim bi-kulli lisān/anā lladhi ajūzu l-samāwāt al-sabʿwa l-arḍīn al-sabʿ fī ṭurfati ʿayn/anā mahdī l-awān/anā ʿĪsāʾ l-zamān/anā ṣāḥib al-mīzān/ anā l-raḥmān/anā l-raḥīm/anā l-ʿalī/anā l-aʿlā/anā yaʿsūb al-muʾminīn/anā yaqīn al-mūqinīn/anā layth Banī Ghālib/anā ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib.*

The Five Spirits of the Divine Man

To Jean-Daniel Dubois
in loyal friendship

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Among the sentences that one finds most frequently in the sermons of ʿAlī, there is: "I am the one who speaks by divine revelation" (*anā al-mutakallim bi-l-waḥy*); and another that can be considered to be the consequence of the first: "I am the Master of hermeneutics" (*anā muʾawwil al-taʾwīl*; in other words "He who initiates into the hidden meaning of divine revelation"); this is what is meant by the Shiʿi doctrine which describes the imam as the "speaking Quran".[1] Indeed, ʿAlī, and after him the imams descended from him, are manifestations of God on earth, as we have seen, and one of the most fundamental aspects of that dimension is that the imam is at the same time the recipient, the transmitter and the ultimate content of the divine Word. Now, if the human nature of the imams possesses such properties it is because of its spiritual constitution. Let us take a closer look.

In a brief but very suggestive 2005 article entitled "The 'Five Limbs' of the Soul: A Manichean Motif in Muslim Garb?", Douglas Karim Crow examined the echoes of the ancient theme of the 'five organs of the soul' in three Muslim authors: the Shiʿi imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, the Sunni mystic al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and the Ismaili Shiʿi thinker Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman. The bulk of the article, which also briefly reviews antecedents in Iran, is devoted to these three authors. At the end of the article Crow writes: 'We refrain from pursuing the question beyond this point, hoping that the interested reader will take the materials presented here and ponder the questions raised'.[2] I will try to be that 'interested reader' Crow appeals to and will return to his article below. This

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1   See M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, in particular chap. 3.

2   D.K. Crow, "The 'Five Limbs' of the Soul: A Manichean Motif in Muslim Garb?", in T. Lawson (ed.), *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought. Essays in Honour of Hermann Landolt*, London/New York, 2005, p. 30 (all of the article: pp. 19-30; on the Iranian antecedents: pp. 19-20; on the Muslim authors: pp. 21-30; footnotes: 31-33).

chapter comprises three parts: 1. Shi'i traditions; 2. their 'prehistory'; 3. their repercussions and implications.

1 Shi'i Traditions

We'll begin our examination with a few traditions recorded by that leading authority on early Shi'i hadith, Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī (d. around 328-329/939-40/41) in the doctrinal section (the *Uṣūl*) of his *Kitāb al-Kāfī* (The Sufficient Book).[3] The chapter on the spirits of the imams in the Book of the Proof (*Kitāb al-ḥujja*) contains these three traditions:

1. "Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq: '... God the Most High created the created beings in three groups as He says it Himself [Quran 56:7-11]: "You shall be three groups next to each other * The companions of the right [or 'of good omen'] * What are the companions of the right [/of good omen]? * And the companions of the left [or 'of ill omen'] * What are the companions of the left ['of ill omen']? * And those who go ahead, those who go ahead * They are the close ones'" [end of Quranic quote].[4] 'Those who go ahead' are the messengers of God and the elite among His creatures in whom he has placed five spirits: God supports them [first] through the holy spirit [*rūḥ al-quds*; literally the spirit of sanctity], by which one has knowledge of things. He supports them [then] through the spirit of faith (*rūḥ al-īmān*), thanks to which they fear God. He supports them through the spirit of power (*rūḥ al-quwwa*), through which they can obey God. He supports them through the spirit of desire (*rūḥ al-shahwa*) through which they desire obedience to God and detest disobedience towards Him. [Finally] He places in them the spirit of movement (*rūḥ al-madraj* – literally the spirit of advancing, of progression) thanks to which people move [literally: come and go]. And God places in the faithful (*mu'minīn*), [who are] the "companions of the right", the last four' [then the hadith repeats word for word the text about the last four spirits in the list].[5]

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3   On this author and his compilation see now M.A. Amir-Moezzi and H. Ansari, "Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī (d. 328 ou 329/939-40 ou 940-41) et son *Kitāb al-Kāfī*. Une introduction", *Studia Iranica* 39/2 (2009): 191-247; expanded version in M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 5. See also A.J. Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shī'ism: Hadith as Discourse Between Qum and Baghdad*, Richmond, 2000, chapters 6 to 8.

4   The terms meaning the "right" and "left", respectively *al-maymana* and *al-mash'ama*, derive from the roots YMN and Sh'M and, etymologically, suggest that which is beneficial, auspicious and that which is maleficent, of ill omen.

5   Al-Kulaynī, *Kitāb al-Kāfī, al-Uṣūl*, ed. J. Muṣṭafawī, with Persian translation, 4 vols., Tehran, n.d. (the 4th vol. translated by H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī dates from 1386/1966), "Kitāb al-ḥujja", bāb fīhī dhikr al-arwāḥ allatī fī l-a'imma, n. 1, vol. 2, 15-16. See also al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī

2. A disciple asked imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir what knowledge the initia-
    tory sage (ʿilm al-ʿālim) possesses.[6] He replies: "… In [the being of] the
    prophets and legatees [awṣiyāʾ, pl. of waṣī; one of the titles of the imam]
    five spirits are found: the holy spirit, the spirit of faith, the spirit of life
    [rūḥ al-ḥayāt; which here replaces the "spirit of movement" of the previ-
    ous hadith], the spirit of power and the spirit of desire. It is through the
    holy spirit that [these men] know absolutely everything [literally "every-
    thing that is found in the world, from below the divine Throne to what is
    found beneath the earth"] … The last four may undergo changes but not
    the holy spirit [literally "the holy spirit doesn't enjoy himself or play"; the
    terms are Quranic]."[7]

3. A disciple asked Jaʿfar what knowledge the imam can have of what is
    happening beneath the earth while he is in a locked room. The imam

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(d. 290/902-903; thus contemporary of al-Kulaynī), *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, ed. Mīrzā Kūčebāghī
(= ed. K), Tabriz, n.d. (around 1960), section 9, chapter 14, n. 1, 445-446; ed. ʿA. Zakīzādeh
Ranānī (= ed. Z), 2 vols. with Persian translation, Qumm, 1391/2012, section 9, chap. 15, n. 1,
vol. 2, 622-623. In al-Ṣaffār, instead of "The holy spirit through which they have knowledge
of things", there is "the holy spirit thanks to which prophets are missioned". Indeed, the holy
spirit seems here to be the individual correspondent of the celestial entity of the same name
that is sometimes considered to be the equivalent of the angel Gabriel, the angel of revela-
tion, and the entity that enables the divine messages to reach the prophets. See also al-Majlisī
Muḥammad Bāqir, *Biḥār al-anwār*, Tehran-Qumm, 110 tomes in 90 vols., 1376-1392/1956-1972,
vol. 25, 52, n. 13. Note that the term *muʾmin* (believer) in Shiʿi technical terminology means
the faithful initiated to the teachings of the imam. It is thus distinct from the term *muslim*,
which means the simple non-initiated Muslim; see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, index
s.v. In al-Kulaynī, the third group, "the companions of the left /of ill omen" are not defined,
but in a tradition reported by al-Ṣaffār (ibid., n. 5 in ed. K = n. 6 in ed. Z), they are identified
with the "People of the Book" (*ahl al-kitāb*) who have not recognized ʿAlī as the legatee of
Muḥammad and of whom God deprived the spirit of faith (they thus only possess the last
three spirits). We are manifestly dealing here with the "majority of Muslims" (distinguished
from the "believers", i.e. the followers of ʿAlī). In the following hadith, "the companions of
the left" are said to be Jews and Christians. It seems that we are dealing with a sort of code,
a pejorative title for the Muslim adversaries of the Shiʿis. It is difficult to see how those who
have not recognized the legitimacy of ʿAlī could be believers of other religions. The same
process can also be seen in al-Barqī (d. around 274/888 or 280/894), *Kitāb al-Maḥāsin*, ed.
J. Muḥaddith Urmawī, Tehran, 1370/1950, "K. ʿiqāb al-aʿmāl", pp. 90 *sqq.*; on this issue see
R. Vilozny, "Pre-Būyid *Ḥadīth* Literature: The Case of al-Barqī from Qumm (d. 274/888 or
280/894) in Twelve Sections", in F. Daftary & G. Miskinzoda (eds.), *The Study of Shiʿi Islam.
History, Theology and Law*, London/New York, 2014, pp. 216-218 (all of it, pp. 203-230). I shall
return more fully to al-Ṣaffār and his work at the end of this chapter.

6   On the technical meanings of the terms *ʿIlm* and *ʿālim* (literally "knowledge" and "sage"),
    see Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, index s.v. and in particular part III-2 ("La Science sacrée"),
    pp. 174-199; also *Id., La religion discrète*, index s.v.

7   Al-Kulaynī, *ibid.*, n. 2, vol. 2, 16-17; al-Ṣaffār, *ibid.*, ed. K, n. 4, 447; ed. Z, n. 5, vol. 2, 627 (else-
    where in the same chapter in al-Ṣaffār, the spirit of movement/life is replaced by the spirit of
    the body -*rūḥ al-badan*); al-Majlisī, *ibid.*, vol. 25, 55, n. 15.

Ja'far replied: '... God placed in the Prophet [i.e. Muḥammad] five spirits: the spirit of life, which enabled him to move and to walk, the spirit of power, which enabled him to get up and exert himself, the spirit of desire, which enabled him to eat, drink and have licit sexual relations, the spirit of faith, through which he believed and judged equitably, and finally the holy spirit, through which he was the bearer of prophecy [rūh al-quds fa-bihi ḥamala l-nubuwwa]. When the Prophet passed away, the holy spirit was transmitted to the imam [al-imām with the definite article; it refers to 'Alī and no doubt to the other imams]. The holy spirit never sleeps, nor is it ever negligent or distracted, nor does it become boastful; which is the case of the other four spirits. It is by the holy spirit that everything is understood.'[8]

We find the five elements of the interior man in another form elsewhere in al-Kulaynī: in tradition no. 23 of the Book of Intelligence and of Ignorance (Kitāb al-ʿaql wa l-jahl) in the same Uṣūl part of the Kitāb al-Kāfī, where intelligence and its four components are mentioned: "Ja'far: 'The pillar of man is intelligence. It is composed of sagacity [fiṭna], understanding [fahm], attention [ḥifẓ] and knowledge [ʿilm]. It is intelligence which makes man perfect, which is his guide, which gives him insight and which is the key to his affairs. When his intelligence is sustained by the Light, he becomes wise, attentive, conscious, full of sagacity and understanding; so that he will know the how, why and where [of things]; he will distinguish what is beneficial for him from what is harmful; he shall know his direction, his attachments and his detachments. His witness to the unity of God will become purer, as will his obedience to God. Once this happens, he will achieve what he was unable to achieve [before] and he will be master what will come to pass [in the future]. He will be fully conscious of the present and will know why he is where he is; where he is coming from and where he is going to. All of this thanks to the power of intelligence'".[9]

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8 Al-Kulaynī, ibid., n. 3, vol.2, 17; variant in al-Ṣaffār, op. cit., section 9, chap. 15, n. 13, 454 (ed. K); section 9, chapter 16, n. 13, vol. 2, 648-649 (ed. Z); here the tradition ends with the following words: "... The holy spirit is unwavering. It is through it that the imam sees [or "that are seen"] the Orient of the earth and its Occident, its lands and its oceans." See also al-Ḥillī, Ḥasan b. Sulaymān (attributed to), Mukhtaṣar Baṣāʾir al-darajāt, Najaf, 1370/1950, 2; al-Majlisī, ibid., vol. 25, 57, n. 25.

9 Al-Kulaynī, op. cit., "Kitāb al-ʿaql wa l-jahl", vol. 1, 29, n. 23. Each of these terms can have many translations (e.g. fiṭna: comprehension, immediate understanding, etc., ḥifẓ: memory, mental alertness, etc.). As we shall see later on, the same problem arises with the languages of texts belonging to other traditions. See also Ibn Bābūya, ʿIlal al-sharāʾiʿ, ed. M.Ṣ. Baḥr al-ʿulūm, Najaf, 1385/1966, chap. 91, n. 2, 103 (shorter version); Ibn Shuʿba, Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl, ed. ʿA.A. Ghaffārī, 1366 solar/1988, pp. 369-370 (the teachings of imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, chapter:

These traditions about the Divine Man, and in particular the divine guide, the imam, and his 'intellective limbs', do not seem to have a specifically Islamic or Arab origin. No source in pre-Islamic Arab culture, in poetry, or in the Quran, can be attributed to them. But the religious and spiritual traditions of Antiquity and Late Antiquity do contain many striking parallels.

2   "Prehistory"

Apart from Manicheism, to which Douglas Karim Crow refers, and to which we will return, the earliest texts which might be at the root of these traditions are Isaiah 11, (1)-2,3 and some of its interpretations. Here is the biblical text (here as it appears in Semitic languages):

"1. (There shall come forth a branch from the stock of Jesse and a shoot shall grow from his roots)/ 2. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him [*rūḫa Yhwh*]: the spirit of wisdom and understanding (*rūḫa hakᵉ māh ū-bīnāh*), the spirit of counsel and might [*rūḫa ʿeṣāh ū-gᵉ būrāh*], the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord [*rūḫa daʿat vᵉ -yirᵉat Yhwh*]."[10] The Syriac text of the Peshiṭṭa gives us: the Spirit of God [*rūḥā da-Loḥā*], the spirit of wisdom and understanding [*rūḥā dᵉ-ḥēkᵉ mᵉtā wa dᵉ-sūkolā*], the spirit of goodness and

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kalāmuhū fī khalq al-insān wa tarkībihī). In his referenced article, D.K. Crow studied this tradition of Jaʿfar and a few other parallel texts attributed to him (*art. cit.*, pp. 21-23) as they concerned the doctrine of the "five attributes of the Father of Light", corresponding to the "five limbs of the soul" of the perfect man in Manicheism: "Reason, Mind, Intelligence, Thought and Understanding". See the classic study of M. Boyce, *A Reader in Manichean Middle Persian and Parthian*, Leiden, 1975, 10 (D.K. Crow, *ibid.*, p. 20; see also Id., "The Role of *al-ʿaql* in Early Islamic Wisdom, with Reference to Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq", unpublished thesis from McGill University, 1996, chap. 5). I shall return to it. Curiously, D.K. Crow seems to ignore the tradition of the "five spirits" attributed to the same Jaʿfar and recorded by the same al-Kulaynī. It is true that it is more relevant to anthropology and that the tradition about the *ʿaql* is more relevant to noetics. However, as we shall see, both areas are inseparable. On the central role of the *ʿaql* (human intelligence, corresponding to the cosmic entity with the same name) in early Shiʿism see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, part I-1 ("la hiéro-Intelligence et la raison"), 15-33. On the difficulties of translating the term *ʿaql* (intelligence, intellect, reason, hiero-intelligence ...), see now G. Gobillot, "Les sources de l'anthropologie spirituelle chez les mystiques musulmans: une réflexion à partir de la notion de *ʿaql*", in A. Temimi (ed.), *Mélanges Luce Lopez-Baralt*, Zaghouan, 2001, pp. 267-314.

10   [Oecumenical French Translation of the Bible, Paris, 1986, pp. 775-776.] Massoretic Hebrew text from the Bible Society in Israel, Jerusalem, 1991, p. 394.

might [*rūḥā de-tarʿīthā wa de-gabo-rūtā*], the spirit of sagacity and fear of God [*rūḥā de-yidʿatā wa de-dēḥe le tēh de-Moryā*].[11] As in the Arabic texts, the terms used to describe the spirits, which also describe all the faculties involved in religious thought or consciousness in general, are liable to be differently translated. Besides, how should they be counted? Is the Spirit of God first in the list, or does it include all the others? Is it identical with the holy spirit? Are the other spirits to be counted one by one or is each group of two to be counted as one spirit with two aspects? Is the 'fear of God' also a spirit, or a virtue in its own right? The fairly numerous interpretations of the verses in question, especially by the Greek and Latin Fathers, make different groupings of spirits and hence divergent numbers of them. So we find four, five, six or most often seven spirits or as many gifts of the holy spirit, and most often the following seven gifts: intelligence, knowledge, wisdom, counsel, piety, strength and fear of God (only Origen lists ten of them).[12] It is however clear that we have here the content, sometimes to the letter, as well as the description, of the five spirits of the Shiʿi traditions. The Hebrew text speaks of the Messiah, the Christ according to the Christian commentators (Augustine also applies the 'gifts' to the sincere Christian faithful); the Shiʿi hadiths speak of 'the elect', that is the prophets and more particularly the imams (some Shiʿi texts also ascribe them to the initiated faithful). The following table attempts an approximate correspondence of elements of Isaiah 11, 2-3 to the Shiʿi hadiths:

Isaiah 11, 2-3	Shiʿi Traditions
Spirit of God/Spirit of Wisdom /Spirit of Knowledge	Holy Spirit
Spirit of the fear of God	Spirit of faith (that leads to fear of God)
Spirit of courage/might	Spirit of power
	Spirit of desire
	Spirit of movement/life/body

11   Ed. Father Benjamin Beit Yadgar, Tbilissi, 2009, p. 1054. I thank my colleague Paul Neuenkirchen for having pointed this out to me.

12   See for example A. Gardeil, 'Dons du Saint-Esprit. Pères grecs; Pères latins', *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, ed. A. Vacant & E. Mangenot, vol. IV/2, 1920, col. 1754-1766; K. Schluetz, Isaias 11,2 (*Die sieben Gaben des Heiligen Geistes*) *in den ersten vier christlichen Jahrhunderten*, Münster, 1932; P.C. Van Lierde, *Doctrina s. Augustini circa dona Spiritus sancti ex textu Isaia XI, 2-3*, Würzburg, 1935.

However, other sources more directly linked to the Shi'i texts appear to have Gnostic and Manichean origins. The Gnostics knew Isaiah 11, 2-3 well, as their rich interpretative tradition reveals.[13] The most remarkable parallels can be found in their commentaries on logion 19 of the Gospel of Thomas, brilliantly situated, identified and studied by Henri-Charles Puech, in particular in his classes at the Collège de France in 1961-62.[14] Here is the text of that logion: "Jesus said: 'Blessed is he who was, before he came into being. If you become my disciples (and) listen to my words, these stones will serve you. For you have *five trees in Paradise* that do not change during summer (and) winter, and their leaves do not fall. He who comes to know them will not taste death.'".[15] According to other passages of the Gospel of Thomas, but also in Gnostic texts like 'Pistis Sophia', the Gospel of Eve quoted by Epiphanius, the Acts of Thomas or even Irenaeus, this text and others refer to 'the Elected Ones', the 'Unique Ones', the 'Living Ones', the 'sons of man' or, in other words, those who have been initiated by Jesus into the secret of things.[16] In a certain number of Coptic Gnostic texts mention is made of the 'mystery of the five Trees', the 'five powers' or the 'five seals' treated as noetic symbols (Untitled Text of the Bruce Codex, Pistis Sophia, Papyrus of Deir el Bala'izah). However, two Manichean writings most resemble these Shi'i traditions about the five spirits and the faculties of intelligence: they are the Coptic Psalter[17] and the Chinese treatise called the 'Traité Chavannes-Pelliot'.[18] In the first, "the five trees of Paradise" of logion 19 are compared to the "five wise virgins" of the Gospel parable and with

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13   See for example *Écrits gnostiques. La bibliothèque de Nag Hammadi*, under the direction of J.-P. Mahé and P.-H. Poirier, Paris, 2007, index. thematic s.v., Esprit, 1772 (in particular: esprit de connaissance, e. de conseil, e. de crainte, e. divin, e. de pensée, e. de puissance, e. de sagesse, e. saint, e. vivant, e. vivifiant).

14   See now H.-Ch. *Puech, En quête de la gnose. II. Sur l'Évangile selon Thomas*, Paris, 1978, pp. 98-104, for the examination that follows.

15   See the translation *L'Évangile selon Thomas*, Coptic text established and translated by A. Guillaumont, H.-Ch. Puech, G. Quispel, W. Till and Y. 'Abd al-Masīḥ, Leiden-Paris, 1959, pp. 13-15 (p. 84 of the manuscript, lines 17-24).

16   H.-Ch. Puech, *En quête de la gnose*, vol. 2, p. 99.

17   *A Manichean Psalm-book*, ed. C.R.C. Allberry, Stuttgart, 1938, II, 161; A. Villey, *Psaumes des errants. Écrits manichéens du Fayyūm*, Paris, 1994: I. Hymne aux Quatre Grands Jours, 60, 134,2 (On the new man, the five psychical ones and the five spiritual ones) and comments, pp. 147 *sqq.*, in particular p. 151, 161, 166; especially XVIII. Psalm of the number five, pp. 104-105, and comments, pp. 343-351; also XXVI. Psalm of the Elect, pp. 120-121 (where we find in verse 25 the People of the Right and the People of the Left from the Quranic verses commented upon in the Shi'i traditions we discussed; see above hadith n. 1) and comments pp. 395-400.

18   Chavannes-Pelliot, *Un traité manichéen retrouvé en Chine*, p. 557 *sqq.*; Id., *En quête de la gnose*, vol. 2, pp. 100-102.

several other series of entities grouped in fives, including the "five gifts" of the holy spirit and the five organs of the soul capable of receiving the holy spirit. The second Manichean writing includes many series of five elements in parallel with the five trees of logion 19, notably the 'five limbs of nature made of light' of the initiate, which are, according to the translation of Chavannes and Pelliot, thought, feeling, reflection, intellect and reasoning.[19] However, a note by Paul Demiéville to Henri-Charles Puech says that the Chinese terms also meaning the five limbs, namely *siang, sin, nien, sseu* and *yi*, are much vaguer. Just as the Arabic terms in the Ja'far's tradition on the faculties of intelligence (*'aql*), they are more or less related to thought in general, and describe notions such as consciousness, imagination, heart, spirit, memory, reflection or intention. Puech then links these texts to other Manichean sources describing the transformation of the "Old Man" into the "New Man" thanks to the *Noûs*-Light, in this case to a fragment of Tourfan M 14, chapter 38 of the Coptic *Kephalaïa* or also chapter 10 of the *Acta Archelaï*. He is thus able to make a list of five spiritual faculties in three important languages of the Manicheans:

– Syriac : *haunā, madd^eā, re'yānā, maḥshabtha, tar'īthā.*
– Greek : *noûs, ennoïa, enthumêsis, phronêsis, logismos.*
– Coptic : *nous, meeue, sbô, sadjne, makmek.*

It should be stressed that in this list the four terms of this 'pentad' mentioned after *noûs* are in fact only different aspects, properties or manifestations of it. This is exactly what is found in the tradition about the faculties of the *'aql*. As Schaeder, Nyberg, Reitzenstein and others have shown, this numbering system is of Iranian origin. The Manicheans must have borrowed their interpretations of logion 19 from second century Gnostics. In the epiclesis of the *Acts of Thomas*, the holy spirit is described as the Envoy or Messenger of the five limbs, in this case *noûs, ennoïa, phronêsis, enthumêsis* and *logismos*. Summarising a theological doctrine of Basilides, Irenaeus writes on the supreme God being surrounded by five hypostases emanating from him, namely *noûs, logos, phronêsis, sophia* and *dunamis*.[20] Similarly, in the *Sophia of Jesus-Christ*, the five or six perfect or immortal limbs of the first man are identical to the Manichean pentad and are listed in the same order. Tertullian says, in *De anima*, xviii, 4, that the Gnostics, notably the Valentinians, made a parallel between the "bodily

19   On pentads in Manicheism see also T. Petitpièce, "The Face of the Father: Pentadization in the Manichaean *Kephalaia* (Chapter 21)", *Vigiliae christianae*, 61, 2007, pp. 470-477; Id., *Pentadic Redaction in Manichaean Kephalaia*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies n. 66, Leiden, 2009.

20   H.-Ch. Puech, *En quête de la gnose*, vol. 2, p. 104. The mention of the *dunamis* seems to throw a certain light on "the spirit of movement" (*rūḥ al-madraj*) of Shi'i traditions, *a priori* inexplicable, as is "the spirit of desire" (*rūḥ al-shahwa*).

senses" (*corporales sensus*) and the five foolish virgins of the Gospel parable, and also between the "intellectual powers" (*intellectuales uires*) and the five wise virgins. The doctrine of the five spiritual limbs or senses thus seems to have existed among Gnostic currents prior to Manicheism.

Michel Tardieu adds the Latin and Middle-Persian terms to Puech's list of the five limbs of the Manichean perfect man.[21] He gives first their general titles in the different languages of the Manichean corpus: the five thoughts (in Parthian), the five aeons, the names of the soul or splendors (in Greek), the five dwellings or fathers (in Syriac), the five worlds (in Syriac, Greek, Latin and Arabic in the description of Manicheans by, for example, Ibn al-Nadīm). He provides the following table:

[trans.] Syriac	Greek	Latin	Middle-Persian
1. Intelligence	Noûs	Mens	bām
2. Science	Ennoïa	Sensus	manohmēd
3. Thought	Phronêsis	Prudentia	ūsh
4. Reflection	enthumêsis	Intellectus	andeshisn
5. Consciousness	logismos	Cogitatio	parmānag[a]

a   See also table on page 367 of M. Tardieu, *Écrits gnostiques*, concerning § 12 of the "Livre de sagesse de Jésus et Eugnoste", p. 180, comments pp. 366-368 (on the five intellective members of the primordial Man).

We have already noted a possible Iranian influence on the list of spiritual faculties. Michel Tardieu's mention of the use of the Middle Persian or Pahlavi language by the Manichaeans brings us back to it.[22] It so happens that one of the most important Zoroastrian texts in Middle-Persian, the *Dēnkart*, contains

21   M. Tardieu, *Le manichéisme*, Paris, 1981, pp. 106-107. According to Tardieu, there are count-less Manichean texts where the theme of the five intellective limbs or the five *membra dei* is present. For Gnostic, probably also pre-Manichean literature see also Id., *Écrits gnostiques. Codex de Berlin*, Paris, 1984, "Livre des secrets de Jean", § 23, pp. 101-103 and comments, pp. 268-271 (on the intellective entities); § 45, pp. 123-125 and commentary, pp. 300-308 (on the psychic body). M. Tardieu dates this source from the second half of the 2nd century, whereas in a more recent study, Bernard Barc and Wolf-Peter Funk, *Le Livre des secrets de Jean. Recension brève* (NH III, 1 et BG, 2), Louvain, 2012, it was dated back to the first half of the same century and was based on knowledge of the Hebrew text of Genesis and not of the Greek text of the Septuaginta. I thank Jean-Daniel Dubois for giving me a copy of his text.

22   See also Tardieu, *Écrits gnostiques*, commentary of § 45, pp. 303 *sqq.* (comparison with several Zoroastrian books).

significant passages about the four or five spiritual faculties of man in rela-
tion to the divine world. It is true that this religious text, which dates from the
9th century AD, is very late, but we also know that the materials compiled in
this type of Zoroastrian writings, composed three centuries after the advent
of Islam and most probably in reaction to it, often have very ancient origins.
Remember that the *Book of Isaiah*, whose verses 11, 2-3 seem to be the primary
source of the doctrines we are studying, includes the history of the deporta-
tion of the Jews to Babylon, their return to Jerusalem and the reconstruction
of the Temple on the orders of the Achaemenid sovereign Cyrus the Second. It
is thus later than the Persian period during which, according to a good num-
ber of scholars, the Jewish religion absorbed some important Zoroastrian
influences.[23]

As for the *Dēnkart*, two chapters of its Third Book in particular discuss,
amongst other things, the components of the interior man. Chapter 123 men-
tions the similarities between the *mēnōg*, the spiritual world, and the *gētī*, the
material world, in the universe as a whole and in man in particular. In a rather
complex list, the spiritual or celestial '*mēnōg*ian' components of the soul are
as follows: *ruvān*, *waxsh*, *čīhr* and *frawahr*, which are the powers of life, *jān*.
The most powerful agent animating these faculties is the *xrad/ashn xrad*,
intelligence or knowledge, itself eminently "*mēnōg*ian", as it is often identi-
fied with the Good Religion (*wēh dēn*).[24] The text again speaks of the compo-
nents of the soul and of the central role of intelligence, both important in our
Shi'i traditions. Then there is chapter 218, the title of which was translated by
Father Jean de Menasce as: "On the *mēnōg*ian realities that are in [the person
of] man, their agents and their operations."[25] Here the agents of the spiritual
realities of man are four in number: *ruwān*, *jān*, *frawahr* and *bōy*. The chap-
ter endeavours to define and link them with other faculties such as *waxsh*,
čīhr, *ahw*, etc. According to Shaul Shaked, who complements the studies of
Harold Bailey on the *xwarnah/farrah* ("light of glory" of the *mēnōg*ian men),

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23   See for example *Introduction à l'Ancien Testament*, ed. J.-D. Macchi, Th. Römer et Ch. Nihan,
        Geneva, 2005, pp. 410 sqq.

24   *Le Troisième Livre du Dēnkart*, translated from Pahlavi by J. de Menasce, Paris, 1973,
        chap. 123, pp. 125 sqq. (= Pahlavi text ed. D.M. Madan, *The Complete Text of the Pahlavi
        Dinkart*, Bombay, 1911, p. 119; M.J. Dresden, *Dēnkart, a Pahlavi Text, facsimile Edition of the
        Manuscript B of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute Bombay*, Wiesbaden, 1966, p. 89). The
        terms are as difficult to translate as the terminology of the components of the soul in
        other languages, as we have seen. On the advice of Prof. Frantz Grenet (whom I whole-
        heartedly thank), the transcriptions from Pahlavi have been updated according to the Mc
        Kenzie system.

25   *Le Troisième Livre de Dēnkart*, chap. 218, pp. 230-231 (= ed. Madan, p. 241; ed. Dresden,
        p. 190).

the several components of the soul and their parallels with the heavenly pow-
ers are a very old Iranian concept. It is precisely these components, the four
to seven faculties, and their articulation with the *mēnōg* world which enable
the relationship between the divine man and the divine entities or with Ahura
Mazdā himself.[26]

3   Further Developments and Implications

To return to the four Shiʿi traditions: one goes back to the fifth imam, Muḥammad
al-Bāqir (d. around 119/737), and the other three to the sixth imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq
(d. 148/765). This takes us back to the end of 1st/7th and especially to the first
half of the 2nd/8th centuries. Heinz Halm's study, a classic, complements
those of Israel Friedländer and Marshall Hodgson and shows that this period
corresponds effectively to the adoption of Manichean, Gnostic and dualistic
doctrines by Shiʿi communities.[27] The absence of direct sources in the first
two centuries of Islam makes the study of the literary connections between
Gnostic movements and the different branches of Shiʿism difficult. But numer-
ous studies, of which the most complete is still the mentioned monograph of
Heinz Halm have shown that religious currents of the Gnostic type, notably
those influenced by, or remaining faithful to, the disciples of Mani (Mānī in
Arabic), Bardaisan (Bardayṣān) and Marcion (Marqiyūn), remained active in
Muslim lands until the 3rd and 4th/9th and 10th centuries, sometimes convert-
ing to the new Arab religion with their own spiritual and intellectual baggage
in tow.[28] These movements were almost all located in the birthplace of Shiʿism,
Iraq (and especially in the cities of Kūfa, not far from the important Sassanian

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26   H.W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-century Books*, Oxford, 1943, *passim*; Sh.
      Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation: Varieties of Religion in Sasanian Iran*, London, 1994,
      pp. 53 *sqq.*; D.K. Crow, "The 'Five Limbs'", p. 20 and footnotes 22 and 23, where reference
      is also made to the four interior qualities in the *Corpus Hermeticum* and in Jamblicus
      (respective references to B.P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 225 and D.J.
      O'Meara, *Pythagoras Revived: Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Oxford, 1989,
      Appendix 1, pp. 218-219).

27   I. Friedländer, "The Heterodoxies of the Shiites according to Ibn Ḥazm", *Journal of the
      American Oriental Society* 28 (1907), pp. 1-80 et 29 (1909), pp. 1-183; Id., "ʿAbdallāh b. Sabaʾ,
      der Begründer der Shīʿa und sein Jüdischer Ursprung", *Zeitschrift für Assyrologie* 23 (1909),
      pp. 32-63; M.G.S. Hodgson, "How did the early Shīʿa become sectarian?", *Journal of the
      American Oriental Society* 75 (1955), pp. 1-31 – now in E. Kohlberg (ed.), *Shīʿism*, Aldershot,
      (2003, article 1); H. Halm, *Die islamische Gnosis. Die Extreme Shia und die ʿAlawiten*,
      Zurich-Munich, 1982, *passim*.

28   Dualistic Gnostics and Manicheans and their doctrines were very well familiar to
      Muslims; see G. Vajda, "Le témoignage d'al-Māturīdī sur la doctrine des Manichéens,
      des Dayṣānites et des Marcionites", *Arabica* 11 (1964), pp. 1-38 et pp. 113-128; G. Monnot,

city of Ḥīra, and of Baṣra).[29] From Muslim heresiographical works, and also from Imami and Ismaili sources, as well as from texts of the so-called "extremist" Shiʿi circles such as the *Kitāb al-Haft wa l-aẓilla* or the *Umm al-kitāb*, (to which I will return), it appears that one can reasonably deduce that teachings of the Gnostic type, being spread most by initiation (thus usually orally or under the seal of secrecy), were widespread during the imamate of the two imams, and especially the second (see above), at the turn of the 1st and 2nd/7th and 8th centuries.[30] Some studies on imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq portray him as a great scholar surrounded by a circle of disciples from many horizons, notably Gnostics, Manicheans, Judeo-Christians, and refer to the large number of texts in all kinds of literary genres attributed to him. They include many teachings derived from the mystical and spiritual traditions of Late Antiquity, from Neo-Platonic theology to the occult sciences, especially alchemy, from Hermeticism to Neo-Pythagoreanism, and from esoteric hermeneutics to

Penseurs musulmans et religions iraniennes. ʿAbd al-Jabbār et ses devanciers, Paris, 1974, especially chapters IV et V; Id., *Islam et religions*, Paris, 1986, chapters III, V et VI.

29   There is no doubt about the presence of Gnostic doctrines in many Shiʿi currents (see above chap. 1, the afferent texts of footnotes 90 to 92). See for example L. Massignon, "Die Ursprünge und die Bedeutung des Gnostizismus im Islam", *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1937, pp. 55-77 (= *Opera Minora*, ed. Y. Moubarac, Beirut, 1963, vol. 1, pp. 499-513); H. Corbin, "De la gnose antique à la gnose ismaélienne", in *Oriente e Occidente nel Medioevo. Convegno di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei), Rome 1957, pp. 105-146 (included in Id., *Temps cyclique et gnose ismaélienne*, Paris, 1982, 3rd part); Id., "L'idée du Paraclet en philosophie iranienne", in *La Persia nel Medioevo* (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei), Rome, 1970, pp. 37-68 (included in Id., *Face de Dieu, face de l'Homme*, Paris, 1983, pp. 311-358); U. Rubin, "Pre-existence and Light. Aspects of the Concept of Nūr Muḥammad", *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975), pp. 62-119; W. al-Qāḍī, "The Development of the Term *Ghulāt* in Muslim Literature with Special Reference to the Kaysāniyya", in I. Dietrich (ed.), *Akten des VII. Kongresses für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft*, Göttingen, 1976, pp. 295-319 (now in E. Kohlberg (ed.), *Shīʿism*, article 8); H. Halm, *Kosmologie und Heilslehre der frühen Ismāʿīliyya. Eine Studie zur islamischen Gnosis*, Wiesbaden, 1978, *passim*; M. Bar-Asher & A. Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion. An Enquiry into its Theology and Liturgy*, Leiden, etc., 2002, *passim*.

30   L. Massignon, "Der gnostische Kult der Fatima im schiitischen Islam", *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1938, pp. 161-173 (= *Opera Minora*, vol. 1, pp. 514-522); E.F. Tijdens, "Der mythologisch-gnostische Hintergrund des *Umm al-Kitāb*", *Acta Iranica* 7 (1977), pp. 241-526; H. Halm, "Das 'Buch der Schatten.' Die Mufaḍḍal-Tradition der *ghulāt* und die Ursprünge des Nuṣairiertums", *Der Islam* 55 (1978), pp. 219-265 and 58 (1981), pp. 15-86; S.M. Wasserstrom, "The Moving Finger Writes: Mughīra b. Saʿīd's Islamic Gnosis and the Myths of its Rejection", *History of Religions* 25/1 (1985), pp. 62-90; D. De Smet, "Au-delà de l'apparent: les notions de *ẓāhir* et *bāṭin* dans l'ésotérisme musulman", *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 25 (1994), pp. 197-220; Id., *La philosophie ismaélienne: un ésotérisme chiite entre néoplatonisme et gnose*, Paris, 2012, *passim*; W. Tucker, *Mahdīs and Millenarians: Shiite Extremists in Early Muslim Iraq*, New York, 2008, *passim*; M.A. Amir-Moezzi *et al.* (eds.), *L'ésotérisme shiʿite*, *passim*.

mystical anthropology.[31] Finally, the three traditions relating to the "five spir-
its" of al-Kulaynī are represented by "the Two Juʿfī": Jābir b. Yazīd al-Juʿfī and
Mufaḍḍal b. ʿUmar al-Juʿfī, both disciples of the two imams. Their names
appear in the chains of transmission (*isnād*) of similar traditions documented
by al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (see more below). Both are known to have transmit-
ted teachings of the Gnostic, esoteric and mystical type, from their teachers,
notably those of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq.[32] All these elements lead us to think that these
traditions date effectively from the end of the 1st/7th or the beginning of the
2nd/8th century. Even their attribution to the two imams, Muḥammad al-Bāqir
and even more to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, seems plausible. In this case, these Shiʿi teach-
ings would be the earliest appearance in Islam of the themes we are consid-
ering and provide evidence of the communities they have traversed on their
journey from the old religious traditions to the new religion.

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. between 295 and 310/907-922) is a further Islamic
thinker to have explored at some length the theme of the components of the
soul. An exact contemporary of al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī and of al-Kulaynī, and an
original mystic of significant importance in the history of esoteric Islamic ideas,
it was to him that Douglas K. Crow devoted most of his article.[33] In many of
his works, such as *al-Masāʾil al-maknūna, ʿIlm al-awliyāʾ* or *Ghawr al-umūr*, the
Sage of Tirmidh identifies four, five or six components of intelligence (*al-ʿaql*)
which he calls the "armies of the spirit, of the heart or of knowledge" (*junūd
al-rūḥ/al-qalb/al-maʿrifa*). They often include the four elements of intelli-
gence of the Shiʿi tradition from the *Kitāb al-ʿaql wa l-jahl* of al-Kulaynī (the
fourth and final tradition described at the beginning of our study) along with
ʿaql: *al-fiṭna* (sagacity), *al-fahm* (understanding), *al-ʿIlm* (knowledge), *al-ḥifẓ*
(memory/attention; replaced sometimes by *al-dhihn*, the aptitude to learn;
variant: *dhukāʾ*, sharpness of spirit), always with the same reserves about their

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31   J. Ruska, *Arabische Alchemisten. II. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, der sechste Imām*, Heidelberg, 1924;
      P. Kraus, *Jābir b. Ḥayyān. Contribution à l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'islam*,
      Cairo, 1942 (re-ed. Paris, 1986), index *s.n.*; T. Fahd, "Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq et la tradition scienti-
      fique arabe", in *Le shīʿisme imāmite, Actes du colloque de Strasbourg (6-9 mai 1968)*, Paris,
      1970, pp. 131-142; P. Lory, *Alchimie et mystique en terre d'islam*, Paris-Lagrasse, 1989, index,
      s.n.; H. Ansari, "Abū l-Khaṭṭāb" (translated from Persian by R. Gholami), *Encyclopaedia
      Islamica*, vol. 2, pp. 203-210.

32   On Jābir b. Yazīd, see now H. Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival. A Bibliographical Survey of
      Early Shīʿite Literature*, vol. 1, Oxford, 2003, index *s.n.* and in particular pp. 86-103; S. Ṭāwūsī
      Masrūr, *Pažūheshī pīrāmūn-e Jābir b. Yazīd Juʿfī*, Tehran, 1389 s./2010. On Mufaḍḍal b.
      ʿUmar, see H. Halm, "Das 'Buch der Schatten'. Die Mufaḍḍal-Tradition der *ghulāt* und die
      Ursprünge des Nuṣairiertums"; L. Capezzzone, "Il *Kitāb al-ṣirāṭ* attribuito a Mufaḍḍal b.
      ʿUmar al-Juʿfī. Edizione del ms. Unico (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale) e studio introdut-
      tivo", *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 69/3-4 (1995), pp. 29-151; M. Asatryan, *Controversies in
      Formative Shiʿi Islam. The Ghulat Muslims and Their Beliefs*, London, 2017.

33   D.K. Crow, *art. cit.*, pp. 24-30.

exact translation. The closeness of al-Tirmidhī to Shiʿi traditions is also percep-
tible in his use of expression: the "armies of intelligence", *junūd al-ʿaql*, remi-
niscent of the famous cosmogonical tradition at the origin of Shiʿi dualism,
the hadith of the 75 Armies of cosmic Intelligence and of cosmic Ignorance
(*junūd al-ʿaql wa l-jahl*).[34] As Geneviève Gobillot has frequently stressed, the
striking parallelism between al-Tirmidhī and al-Kulaynī is evident.[35] It shows
very clearly that the Transoxianian mystic drew from the same Shiʿi sources
as the author of the *Kitāb al-Kāfī*, and not only on the subject his doctrine of
spiritual intelligence.

The third and last author considered by Douglas K. Crow is the Ismaili Shiʿi
propagandist Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman (d. around 380/990).[36] In his *Sarāʾir
wa asrār al-nuṭaqāʾ*, Jaʿfar seems to think of four components of intelligence
(*al-ʿaql*); *fikr* (thought/meditation), *dhikr* (recall/remembrance), *dhihn* (aptitude
to learn) and *ḥifẓ* (memory/attention) and makes a link, in a confusing manner
it must be said, between the five intellectual faculties of man (*ʿaql, nafs, dhikr,
dhihn, fikr*) and the five "hypostases" of the Ismaili cosmogonic system, namely

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34   D.K. Crow, *ibid.*, pp. 24-26 et p. 29; see the translation of *Ghawr al-umūr* of al-Tirmidhī
      by G. Gobillot, *Le Livre de la Profondeur des choses*, Presses universitaires de Septentrion,
      1996, pp. 259-260 et 271-272. On the tradition of the Armies of Intelligence and Ignorance,
      see D.K. Crow, "The Role of al-ʿaql in Early Islamic Wisdom, with Reference to Imam
      Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq", chap. 5; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp.18-21; Id., *La religion dis-
      crète*, chap. 12, pp. 304 sqq.; Id., "Worlds and Their Inhabitants. Some Notes on Imami-Shiʿi
      Cosmo-Anthropogony", in E. Coda and C. Martini Bonadeo (eds.), *De l'Antiquité tardive au
      Moyen-Âge. Études de logique aristotélicienne et de philosophie grecque, syriaque, arabe et
      latine offertes à Henri Hugonnard-Roche*, Paris, 2014, pp. 519-529. This tradition is recorded
      by numerous early Shiʿi sources anterior to, contemporary with or slightly later than
      al-Tirmidhī, for example in chronological order: al-Barqī (m. vers 274/888 ou 280/894),
      Kitāb al-Maḥāsin, vol. 1, pp. 96-98; al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, "K. al-ʿaql wa l-jahl",
      n. 14, vol. 1, pp. 23-26; (Pseudo?) al-Masʿūdī (m. 345/956), *Ithbāt al-waṣiyya*, Najaf, s.d.,
      pp. 1-3; Ibn Shuʿba (living in the mid-4th/10th centuries), *Tuḥaf al-ʿuqūl*, pp. 423-425. On
      the attribution of *Ithbāt al-waṣiyya* to al-Masʿūdī and the problems it poses, see Ch. Pellat,
      "Masʿūdī et l'imāmisme", in *Le shīʿisme imāmite*, pp. 69-90; and now Ḥ. Anṣārī (Ansari),
      "Moʿammā-ye čand ketāb: az *Kitāb al-awṣiyāʾ*-e Shalmaghānī tā *Ithbāt al-waṣiyya*-ye
      Masʿūdī (hamrāh bā barrasī-ye yekī az manābeʿ-e do ketāb-e *al-Hidāyat al-kubrā* va
      Dalāʾil al-imāma)", in Id., *Barrasī hā-ye tārīkhī dar ḥawze-ye eslām va tashayyoʿ*, Tehran,
      1390 solar/2012, chap. 86, pp. 875-918.

35   G. Gobillot, al-Tirmidhī, *Le livre de la Profondeur des choses* (previous footnote), p. 96, 121,
      pp. 134-136, 139-140 (where reference to the influence of Manicheism on al-Tirmidhī is
      made), pp. 259-260, 271-272; ead., "Jésus selon les mystiques musulmans", *Graphé* 7, special
      issue "Les vies de Jésus" (1998), pp. 101-102 (all of the article, pp. 60-135); ead., "Un point
      sur les études tirmidhiennes", *Annales Islamologiques* 32 (2000), p. 77 (all of it, pp. 67-79);
      ead., "Les sources de l'anthropologie spirituelle ...", p. 283, 288, pp. 294-296, 309-310, p. 312;
      ead., al-Tirmidhī, *Le livre des Nuances ou de l'impossibilité de la synonymie* (*Kitâb al-furûq
      wa manʿ al-tarâduf*), Paris, 2006, pp. 488-489.

36   D.K. Crow, *art. cit.*, p. 30.

sābiq, *tālī*, *jadd*, *fatḥ* and *khayāl*. Both al-Tirmidhī and Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman wrote about intelligence and its components and many other authors, especially Ismaili philosophers and theologians also based their noetics on it.[37]

Other sources reflect upon the multiple spirits of the man of God, for example the famous Shiʿi esoteric text *Umm al-kitāb*, of which only an archaic Persian translation from an Arabic original exists. Although Central Asian Ismailis hold it as sacred, it seems to derive from proto-Ismaili esoteric Gnostic circles, which heresiographers accuse of extremism (*ghuluww*). As for the dating of the Arabic original, its editor, Wladimir Ivanow, hesitated, in publications spanning many decades, between the 2nd/8th and the 5th/10th-11th centuries.[38] Now, revising the analyses of Ivanow, Filippani-Ronconi and Tijdens, Heinz Halm, who to date is the author of the most comprehensive studies of the text, believes that its oldest parts date back to the first half of the 2nd/8th century[39] and therefore to the period of the imamate of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. However, much more recently, Sean Anthony, in a very well-documented study, has reconsidered this dating and believes that the oldest parts of this work date from the period of the minor Occultation of the twelfth imam of the Imamis, in the second half of the 3rd/9th century.[40] In this case, the work is the precise contemporary of the *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt* of al-Ṣaffār and the *Kāfī* of al-Kulaynī. In any case, all this

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37   On this system and sacred pentads in Ismailism, too briefly discussed by D.K. Crow, see P. Walker, "Cosmic Hierarchies in Early Ismāʿīlī Thought. The View of Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī", *Muslim World* 66 (1976), pp. 14-28; and above all H. Halm, *Kosmologie und Heilslehre der früh en Ismāʿīlīya. Eine Studie zur islamischen Gnosis*, Wiesbaden, 1978, pp. 67-74; Id., "The Cosmology of the Pre-Fatimid Ismāʿīliyya", in F. Daftary (ed.), *Mediaeval Ismaiʿili History and Thought*, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 75-83; D. De Smet, "La fonction noétique de la triade al-Jadd, al-Fatḥ et al-Khayāl. Les fondements de la connaissance prophétique dans l'ismaélisme", in H. Biesterfeldt und V. Klemm (eds.), *Differenz und Dynamik im Islam: Festschrift für Heinz Halm zum 70. Geburtstag*, Würzburg, 2012, pp. 319-336.

38   W. Ivanow, "Notes sur l'Ummu' l-kitāb des Ismaéliens de l'Asie Centrale", *Revue des Études Islamiques* 6 (1932), pp. 425-426 (5th/10-11th century); Id., *The Alleged Founder of Ismailism*, Bombay, 1946, pp. 99-101 and *Studies in Early Persian Ismailism*, Leiden, 1948, 108 (2nd/8th century); Id., *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliographical Survey*, Tehran, 1963, pp. 193 sqq. (5th/10-11th century).

39   H. Halm, "'Das Buch der Schatten' …", pp. 36 *sqq*.; Id., *Die islamische Gnosis*, pp. 113 sqq.; Id., "The Cosmology of the Pre-Fatimid Ismāʿīliyya", pp. 82 sq. See also P. Filippani-Ronconi, *Ummu'l-Kitāb*, Naples, 1966; Id., "Note sulla soteriologia e sul simbolismo cosmico dell'*Ummu'l-Kitāb*", *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli*, 14 (1964), pp. 98-141; E.F. Tijdens, "Der mythologisch-gnostische Hintergrund des (*Umm al-kitāb*)". See also B. Radtke, "Iranian and Gnostic Elements in Early *Taṣawwuf*: Observations Concerning the *Umm al-kitāb*", in G. Gnoli and A. Panaino (eds.), *Proceedings of the First European Conference of Iranian Studies* (Serie orientale Roma 67/2), ii, Rome, 1990, pp. 519-530.

40   S.W. Anthony, "The Legend of ʿAbdallāh ibn Sabaʾ and the Date of *Umm al-Kitāb*", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 21/1 (2011), pp. 1-30 (in particular pp. 17-18).

falls fully within what I have elsewhere called the pre-Buyid "original esoteric" tradition.[41]

At the beginning of the *Umm al-kitāb*, during a session in school, the young imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir, a possessor of miraculous initiatory knowledge, explains the esoteric meanings of the alphabet to his teacher ʿAbdallāh b. Ṣabbāḥ.[42] In the course of these explanations, the different elements of the traditions we have examined in al-Kulaynī, describing the spiritual and intellectual capacities of the man of God, are mentioned. They are the spirit of life (*rūḥ al-ḥayāt*), the spirit of faith (*rūḥ al-īmān*), the spirit of memory/attention (*rūḥ al-ḥifẓ*), the spirit of reflection/meditation (*rūḥ al-fikr*), the spirit of power (*rūḥ al-jabarūt*; cf. *rūḥ al-quwwa* in al-Kulaynī), the spirit of knowledge (*rūḥ al-ʿIlm*), the spirit of intelligence (*rūḥ al-ʿaql*), the holy spirit/spirit of sanctity (*rūḥ al-quds*) also called the universal spirit (*rūḥ-i kull*, in Persian) or the supreme spirit (*rūḥ al-akbar* and *rūḥ al-aʿẓam* [sic, instead of *al-rūḥ al-kubrā* and *al-rūḥ al-ʿuẓmā*]). A little further into the text, the spirits of the five physical senses are matched with the " Five of the Mantel" (Muḥammad, Fāṭima, ʿAlī, al-Ḥasan et al-Ḥusayn) and the five interior spirits crowned, yet again, by the holy spirit.[43] Elsewhere, the five "hypostases" of Ismailism are mentioned: *ʿaql*, *nafs*, *fatḥ*, *jadd*, *khayāl* (translated here as universal Intellect, universal Soul, Victory, Glory and Imagination), matched with the *afrād* (the Lonely Ones) and the *yatīm* (the Orphans or the Incomparable Ones) whom the Nuṣayrī Shiʿis identify with the five companions of ʿAlī, namely Salmān the Persian, al-Miqdād b. Aswad, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, ʿUthmān b. Maẓʿūn and ʿAmmār b. Yāsir (or according to another list: al-Miqdād, Abū Dharr, ʿAbdallāh b. Rawāḥa, ʿUthmān b. Maẓʿūn and Qanbar b. Kādān).[44]

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41   M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 33 *sqq.*; Id. and Ch. Jambet, *Qu'est-ce que le shiʿisme?*, Paris, 2004, part III, chapters 1 to 3.

42   Ed. W. Ivanow, "Ummu'l-kitāb", *Der Islam* 23 (1936), pp. 21 *sqq.* (all of the article and the Persian text, pp. 1-132). The name of ʿAbdallāh b. Saba' has been changed, deliberately or not, into ʿAbdallāh b. Ṣabbāḥ (see *ibid.*, p. 7); on this change see Ed. W. Ivanow, "Notes sur l'Ummu'l-kitāb", p. 428 and footnote 2; E.F. Tijdens, "Der mythologisch-gnostische Hintergrund des (*Umm al-kitāb*)", p. 279.

43   Text of the *Umm al-kitāb* (ed. Ivanow), pp. 28-31: the spirits of sight (*rūḥ-e bīnāʾī*), of hearing (*shinavāʾī*), of smell (*būyāʾī*), of taste (*čāshnīgīr*), of speech (*sic gūyāʾī!* instead of touch?), corresponding respectively on the one hand to al-Ḥusayn, al-Ḥasan, Fāṭima, Muḥammad and ʿAlī, and on the other hand to the spirit of life, of faith, of memory/attention, of thought/meditation and of knowledge. The holy spirit placed above the others is presented as being the visible form of the divine Person (*rūḥ al-quds ke muʿāyana-ye shakhṣ-e khodāvand ast*).

44   *Umm al-kitāb*, 107; on the pleroma of the Lonely Ones/Orphans in Ismailism and above all in Nuṣayrism, see M. Moosa, *Extremist Shīʿites: the Ghulat Sects*, New York, 1988, pp. 357 *sqq.*; M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, index s.v. *yatīm, yatīmiyya*. They go back to the Shiʿi sect of the People of Five (*Mukhammisa*); see L. Massignon, *La*

The last text I will consider here is *a priori* unexpected: the *Gospel of Barnabas*, in its Muslim re-reading. An enigmatic apocryphal text of Spanish origin, written probably by one or many Moriscos (Spanish Muslims forced to convert to Christianity during the 15th and 16th centuries, hence after the Reconquista) or perhaps, on the contrary, by a Christian monk converted to Islam; the *Gospel of Barnabas* is a "Life of Jesus" compatible with the idea that a certain Islam has of the New Testament and of the figure of Christ. The oldest reference to it is from the 17th century, but the only manuscript that has come down to us, in Italian and preserved in Vienna, is of the 16th century.[45] What is remarkable, in view of the matter under discussion, is that the text has been thought by some scholars, for example Lonsdale and Laura Ragg, Luigi Cirillo and Jan Joosten, to be part of the Gnostic Diatessaric currents.[46] We now know, thanks to the recent works of Michael Ebstein and Ehud Krinis who have very usefully complemented Shlomo Pines' classic study, that Spanish Muslim communities with gnostic and mystical leanings were profoundly influenced by Shi'i, notably Ismaili, thought.[47] It is therefore very plausible

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         passion de Hallâj, martyr mystique de l'Islam, Paris, re-ed. 1975, index s.v. Mukhammisa and Mukhammisî, vol. 4, p. 271.

45   See for example. J. Jomier, "L'Évangile selon Barnabé", *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales* 6 (1959-1961), pp. 137-226; M. De Epalza, "Sobre un posible Autor Español des Evangelio de Barnabé", *Andalus* 28 (1963), pp. 479-491; P.S. van Koningsveld, "The Islamic Image of Paul and the Origin of the Gospel of Barnabas", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996), pp. 200-228; L.F. Bernabe Pons, *El texto morisco del Evangelio de San Barnabé*, Granada, Universidad de Granada, 1998, introduction. See also Sh. Pines, *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source*, Jerusalem (The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Proceedings 11, 13), 1966 (according to Pines a *Gospel of Barnabas* was known of Muslim authors of the 10th century; but are we dealing with the same text?).

46   L. & L. Ragg, *The Gospel of Barnabas*, Oxford, 1907, introduction, pp. 4-11; L. Cirillo and M. Frémaux, *Évangile de Barnabé*, with a foreword by Henry Corbin (researches on the composition and origin of the text, Italian text and French translation with notes and index), Paris, 1977, introduction; J. Joosten, "The Gospel of Barnabas and the Diatessaron", *Harvard Theological Review*, 95/1, January 2002, pp. 73-96. See also Sh. Pines, *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source*, pp. 13 sqq.; H. Corbin, "L'Évangile de Barnabé et la prophétologie islamique", *Cahiers de l'Université Saint-Jean de Jérusalem*, Cahier n° 3, Paris, 1977, pp. 169-212.

47   Pines, "Shī'ite Terms and Conception in Judah Halevi's Kuzari", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980), pp. 165-251; M. Ebstein, "Secrecy in Ismā'īlī Tradition and the Mystical Thought of Ibn al-'Arabī", *Journal Asiatique* 298.2 (2010), pp. 303-343; Id. and S. Sviri, "The So-Called *Risālat al-Ḥurūf* (Epistle on Letters) Ascribed to Sahl al-Tustarī and Letter Mysticism in al-Andalus", *Journal Asiatique* 299/1 (2011), pp. 213-217; Id., "Absent yet All Times Present: Further Thoughts on Secrecy in the Shī'ī Tradition and in Sunnī Mysticism", *Al-Qanṭara* 34/2 (2013), pp. 387-413; and now *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus. Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-'Arabī and the Ismā'īlī Tradition*, Leiden, 2014; E. Krinis, "The Arabic Background of the Kuzari", *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 21/1

that the sources of this text could be Gnostic Christian and Shi'i, most probably Ismaili. Chapter XLIV of the *Gospel of Barnabas* has: "The messenger of God … is adorned with the spirit, with intelligence and with (good) counsel, with the spirit of wisdom and of strength, the spirit of fear and of love …"[48] In this list of spirits are some spirits from Isaiah 11, 2-3 and from the Shi'i texts discussed above. Then in chapter CX, the following words are put into the mouth of Jesus: "… Have the desire to be saints … You shall not receive what you do not wish to desire. If you desire sainthood, God is mighty enough to make you saints in less than the blink of an eye."[49]

Lonsdale and Laura Ragg translate: "*If you really wish the sanctity by your spiritual desire*."[50] It seems to me that we are not very far from the enigmatic "spirit of desire" (*rūḥ al-shahwa*) of the first hadith of the "Book of the Proof" from the *Kāfī* of al-Kulaynī, introduced at the beginning of the present study.

What do we learn from the texts (and their list is not exhaustive[51]) we have examined? First, they all their originated in, or were derived from Shi'i doctrines. Then, the ultimate objective of their authors is to prove and to explain, by closely entwined theological, anthropological and noetic arguments, that the divine man is he who is in a direct relationship with God. To receive divine inspiration or revelation is the ultimate purpose and the function of holy intelligence (*'aql*), the reflection in humanity of cosmic Hiero-intelligence, equivalent to the Holy Spirit or the spirit of sanctity (*rūḥ al-quds*), a Quranic expression always associated with Jesus Christ in the Quran, identified by some Sunni theologians with the angel Gabriel and/or to the Quranic "loyal spirit" (*al-rūḥ al-amīn*), and by philosophers with the active intellect (*al-'aql al-fa''āl*).[52] Most probably inherited from Shi'ism, in a process in which al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, one the oldest and most significant theologians of Muslim hagiology, seems to have played a capital role, the capacity to receive divine inspiration becomes one of the characteristics of the saint in Sunni mysticism. However, the Shi'i doctrine implied by those traditions about the interior qualities of the divine man, whose perfect manifestation is the imam, goes much further, since its consequence is the persistence, the continuity, of prophecy. Here again, we

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(2013), pp. 1-56; Id., *God's Chosen People: Judah Halevi's Kuzari and the Shī'ī Imām Doctrine*, Turnhout, 2014.

48   *Évangile de Barnabé*, translated by Cirillo and Frémaux, 317, pp. 130-131 of manuscript.

49   *Ibid.*, pp.407-409, 270-272 of manuscript.

50   L. & L. Ragg, *The Gospel of Barnabas*, p. 313.

51   For example, on the different "spirits" in the esoteric Shi'i work *Kitāb al-Haft*, see M. Asatryan, *Controversies in Formative Shi'i Islam*, pp. 154-155.

52   To my knowledge in Shi'ism the Holy Spirit has not been identified with the angel Gabriel. On this subject in general, see S. Griffith, "Holy Spirit", *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. 2, pp. 442-444.

are in the prolongation of the Gnostic traditions of Late Antiquity with, in the background, the theory of the direct communication with God, so emphasised in the *Enneads* of Plotinus in particular and in Neo-Platonic writings in general. The ancient Shiʿi corpus of the Hadith is totally explicit in this respect. But Shiʿism thus finds itself in contradiction with the "orthodox" dogma according to which Muḥammad is "the seal of prophecy" (understood as meaning the last of the prophets), and Islam is the last religion before the end of the world. I shall return to this.

In al-Kulaynī's "Book of the Proof" the chapter on the "five spirits" of the imam is preceded by that describing the imam as a *muḥaddath* (the being with whom celestial entities, angels included, discourse) and a *mufahham* (the one to whom is given Understanding from Above).[53] It is then followed by a chapter on the imam's investiture by the celestial entity called the Spirit (*al-rūḥ*) of which the Quran speaks (e.g. Q. 16:2, 17:85 or 42:52): "the Spirit proceeding from the Order of the Lord", by means of which the imam is able to directly receive divine revelations.[54] Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (d. 290/902-903), writing most probably a few years before al-Kulaynī, is even more audacious in his *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*.[55] For example, the chapter on the five spirits of the imams records more than twice as many traditions as al-Kulaynī.[56] It is immediately followed by five chapters which lay heavy emphasis upon the abilities of the imams to receive revelations via dozens of traditions: "chapter on the fact that the holy spirit rejoins the imams when these need it";[57] "chapter on the Spirit

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53 Al-Kulaynī, *op.cit.*, "Kitāb al-ḥujja", bāb anna al-aʾimma muḥaddathūn mufahhamūn, vol. 2, pp. 13-15; on these highly technical terms of Shiʿi imamology see E. Kohlberg, "The Term 'Muḥaddath' in Twelver Shīʿism", in *Studia Orientalia memoriae D.H. Baneth dedicata*, Jerusalem, 1979, pp. 39-47 (included in Id., *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shīʿism*, Aldershot, 1991, article n. v); M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, index s.v. and in particular pp. 176 sqq.

54 Al-Kulaynī, *ibid.*, bāb al-rūḥ allatī yusaddid Allāh bihā al-aʾimma, vol. 2, pp. 17-20.

55 On this major compiler of hadith and his work see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummî (m. 290/902-3) et son Kitâb baṣâʾir al-darajât", *Journal Asiatique* 280/3-4 (1992), pp. 221-250; expanded version of this article in Id., *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 4 ("Avènement de la gnose. Une monographie sur la connaissance compilée par al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī"); A.J. Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shīʿism: Hadith as Discourse Between Qum and Baghdad*, chapters 5 and 7.

56 Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, section 9, *bāb mā jaʿala Allāh fī l-anbiyāʾ wa l-awṣiyāʾ wa l-muʾminīn wa sāʾir al-nās min al-arwāḥ wa annahū faḍl al-anbiyāʾ wa l-aʾimma min āl Muḥammad bi-rūḥ al-quds wa dhikr al-arwāḥ al-khams/khamsa* (chapter on the spirits God has placed in the prophets, the legatees [i.e. the imams], the believers [i.e. the initiated faithful] and the others and on the fact that the superiority of the prophets and imams descended from Muḥammad is due to [the presence in them] of the holy spirit, with the mention of the five spirits) (I give the chapter titles first in the version of the K edition, then in that of the Z edition).

57 *Bāb fī l-aʾimma anna al-rūḥ al-quds tatalaqqāhum idhā iḥtājū ilayh.*

about which God has proclaimed in His Book: 'Thus we have revealed to you a Spirit proceeding from our Order', [Q. 42:52] which is present in the Messenger of God (i.e. Muḥammad) and in the imams, and who informs, guides and supports them";[58] "chapter on the questions asked to the initiating sage (i.e. the imam) regarding the initiatory knowledge to which he has access thanks to the Spirits he possesses, the knowledge he increases or of which he reveals the secret /that he interprets, and all this [through the intermediary] of the Spirit";[59] "chapter on the Spirit about which God said: 'They will question thee concerning the Spirit.' Say: 'The Spirit is of the bidding of my Lord. [Q. 17: 85], that it is found in the Messenger of God and in the People of his Family, that it guides, supports and teaches them'";[60] "chapter on the Spirit about which God said: 'He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His command' [Q. 16: 2], that his Spirit is found with the prophets and legatees and on the difference between the Spirit and the angels."[61]

I would like to end this discussion with some particularly significant traditions taken from those chapters:

1. "Someone asked imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq: 'May I be your ransom! Is it possible that one asks you [the imams] a question and that you do not know the answer?' – 'Yes, it may occur'. – 'In that case what do you do?' – 'The holy spirit teaches it to us (*tatalaqqānā bihi rūḥ al-quds*)'."[62]

2. "Someone asked imam Jaʿfar: 'How do you [the imams] judge the affairs [of the faithful]?' – 'Thanks to the precepts of God, those of David and Muḥammad. And if a case occurs that is not found in the Book of ʿAlī, it is then that the holy spirit teaches it to us and God favours us through inspiration (*talaqqanā bihi rūḥ al-quds wa alhamanā Allāh ilhāman*)'."[63]

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58 *Bāb al-rūḥ allatī qāla Allāh fī kitābihī: "wa kadhālika awḥaynā ilayka rūḥan min amrinā" annahā fī rasūli llāhi wa fī l-aʾimmati yukhbiruhum wa yusaddiduhum wa yuwaffiquhum.*

59 *Bāb mā yusʾalu al-ʿālim ʿan al-ʿIlm alladhī yuhaddathu bihi min ṣuḥuf ʿindahum azdādahu aw riwāya fa-akhbar bi-sirr/sharḥihi wa anna dhālika min al-rūḥ.*

60 *Bāb al-rūḥ allatī qāla Allāh: "yasʾalūnaka ʿan al-rūḥ qul al-rūḥ min amr rabbī" annahā fī rasūl Allāh wa ahl baytihi yusaddiduhum wa yuwaffiquhum wa yufaqqihuhum.*

61 *Bāb fī l-rūḥ allatī qāla Allāh: "yunazzilu l-malāʾika bil-rūḥ min amrihi" wa hiya takūna maʿ al-anbiyāʾ wa l-awṣiyāʾ wa l-farq bayna al-rūḥ wa l-malāʾika.*

62 Al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir*, section 9, chap. 15 (ed. K = ch. 16, ed. Z), n. 1.

63 *Ibid.*, n° 6; also al-Ḥillī, *Mukhtaṣar Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, p. 1; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 25, p. 56, n. 21. David, an important biblical figure of the Quran, is the symbol of the just and wise judge as he is inspired by God, like Solomon. The Book of ʿAlī (*Kitāb ʿAlī*) refers, in the Shiʿi hadith corpus, either to the Quranic recension of ʿAlī, either said to be the only complete one among all the recensions, or to one of the secret books of the imams; see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 185-189 (in particular p. 187); E. Kohlberg, "Authoritative Scriptures in Early Imāmī Shīʿism", in E. Patlagean and A. Le Boulluec (eds.), *Les retours aux Écritures: fondamentalismes présents et passés*, Louvain, pp. 295-312 (in particular pp. 300-302); H. Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival*, pp. 4-12. This type of

3. "Someone asked imam Jaʿfar regarding the Quranic verse: 'Thus we have revealed to you a Spirit proceeding from our Order'. He replied: 'Since God has made this Spirit descend on Muḥammad, it has not gone back up to heaven because it has remained among us [the imams]'."[64]

4. "A disciple asked imam Jaʿfar: 'The science which you [the imams] teach, have you learnt it from other men or do you have at your disposal a writing from the Messenger of God?' [implied meaning: what you are teaching is not found in the Quran; it stems from another source] Jaʿfar: This affair is greater than all that (al-amr aʿẓam min dhālika). Have you not heard what God proclaims in His Books: 'Thus we have revealed to you a Spirit proceeding from our Order when you did know not what the Book and faith were?' – Indeed [I know this verse]. – It is by the divine gift of the Spirit that [Muḥammad] received knowledge and it is thus that a servant of God [i.e. Jaʿfar himself and by extension all the imams] is initiated into knowledge and understanding (wa kadhālika hiya ntahat ilā ʿabdin ʿāliman bihā l-ʿilm wa l-fahm)."[65]

5. "Imam Jaʿfar was asked about the Quranic verse: 'They will question thee concerning the Spirit.' Say: 'The Spirit is of the bidding of my Lord'. The imam replied: 'It is a creature more magnificent than [the archangels] Gabriel and Michael. It was with the Messenger of God and it is with the imams. It comes from the kingdom of God (kāna maʿa rasūli llāhi wa huwa maʿa l-aʾimmati wa huwa mina l-malakūti)."[66]

6. We end the examples with a particularly significant hadith about ʿAlī: "Imam Jaʿfar was asked about the first imam, ʿAlī: '... Some claim that when the Messenger of God sent ʿAlī to Yemen in order for him to judge the affairs of the people, he declared: "There is not a case I do not resolve in obedience to the precepts of God and His Messenger" ... Now, how was that even possible when the totality of the Quran had not yet been revealed and the Messenger of God was absent?' Jaʿfar replied: 'It was the holy spirit that taught him' (tatalaqqāhu bihi rūhu l-qudsi)."[67]

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rather frequent tradition seems clearly show that for cases that are not foreseen in the Quran and the Tradition, the inspired sage, and only he, has the power to establish ad hoc prescriptions, original rulings or new doctrines.

64 Baṣāʾir, section 9, chap. 16 (ed. K = ch. 17, ed. Z), n. 11 (the next three hadiths have practically the same content); al-Majlisī, op.cit., vol. 25, 61, n. 36.

65 Baṣāʾir, section 9, chap. 17 (ed. K = chap. 18, ed. Z), n. 3; al-Majlisī, op.cit., vol. 25, 62, n. 40.

66 Baṣāʾir, ibid., chap. 18 (ed. K = chap. 19, ed. Z), n. 9 (in this chapter numerous hadiths have more or less the same content); also al-Kulaynī, op.cit., vol. 1, 273; al-ʿAyyāshī, Tafsīr, ed. H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī, Qumm 1380/1960, vol. 2, p. 317, n. 165; al-Majlisī, op.cit., vol. 58, p. 42, n. 15.

67 Baṣāʾir, ibid., chap. 15 (ed. K = chap. 16, ed. Z), n. 8; also al-Ḥillī, Mukhtaṣar, p. 2; al-Majlisī, Biḥār, vol. 25, p. 57, n. 23 and vol. 39, p. 151, n. 2.

This last tradition declares in the most explicit way, as if there was any more need for it, that the imam is capable, thanks to the holy spirit, a celestial entity but also a component of celestial origin of his own soul, of entering directly into communion with the source of all revelations. If the case arises, he needs neither the Prophet nor the Quran. This point is, it seems to me, the real centre of gravity and at the same time the ultimate consequence of the Shiʻi traditions on the internal faculties of the divine man, which are derived from doctrines inherited from numerous religious and philosophical traditions of Late Antiquity, more specifically from Manicheism. It transforms the imam, and even each initiate, into a prophet in the fullest sense of the term. Now, the Imamis do not declare this explicitly, contrary to the different branches of Ismailism which profess more or less openly the existence of a prophet and of a religion belonging to the seventh and last cycle of humanity, thus after the cycle of Muḥammad and of Islam, which are of the sixth. It is because such a doctrine runs contrary to the dogma of the sealing of prophecy by Muḥammad, the "seal of prophets" (*khātim/khātam al-nabiyyīn*) of verse 33: 40, itself another borrowing from Manicheism. This discretion seems directly linked to the semantic evolution of that expression, which, in the first two or three centuries of Islam, did not have yet have for all Muslims the meaning it would later exclusively assume, namely "the last of the prophets". Before this meaning became fixed in dogma, in many circles, and more particularly in esoteric Shiʻi ones, the perpetual continuity of prophecy transmitted, firstly, evidently, through the imams, but then also through their initiated faithful,[68] was widely believed in. This is what we shall examine in detail in the next two chapters.

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68   However, certain (marginal?) currents seem to have denied the possibility of the continuity of prophecy through the imams; for example the circle of Hishām b. al-Ḥakam and his disciple al-Faḍl b. Shādhān (see T. Bayhom-Daou, "Hishām b. al-Ḥakam"; ead., "The Imam's Knowledge and the Quran").

"The Night of Qadr" (Quran, Surah 97) in Early Shiʿism

1   An Enigmatic Text

The prophetic powers of ʿAlī and of the imams descended from him are also illustrated in the traditions concerning the Night of Qadr (Destiny, Decree, Power) which the Quran speaks about:

   In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

1.   Indeed, We sent it down on the Night of Qadr
   – And what shall teach thee what is the Night of Qadr?
   – The Night of Qadr is better than a thousand months,
   – In it the angels and the Spirit descend, by the leave of their Lord, upon every Order
   – Peace it is, until the rising of dawn.[1]

Here is an "attempt at translation", to use Jacques Berque's expression, of the enigmatic surah 97, called "al-Qadr" (or "Innā anzalnāh", the first words of the text after the *basmala*) and one of the shortest in the Quran.[2] The word *qadr* has many different meanings. This is why I have preferred to stick to the original Arabic, just as Kasimirski does in his translation of the Quran.[3] The

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1   *Bi-smⁱ llāhⁱ r-raḥmānⁱ r-raḥīm/ innā anzalnāhᵘ fī laylatⁱ l-qadr/wa mā adrākᵃ mā laylatⁱ l-qadr/ laylatᵘ l-qadrⁱ khayrᵘⁿ min alfⁱ shahr/tanazzalᵘ (?)l-malāʾikatᵘ wa r-rūḥᵘ fīhā bi-ʾidhnⁱ rabbihim min kullⁱ amr/salāmᵘⁿ hiya ḥattā maṭla ͑ ⁱ l-fajr.*

2   J. Berque, *Le Coran. Essai de traduction*, Paris, 1995². The understanding and translation of this surah raise countless problems in almost each line. That is also true of the word *al-qadr* itself, which has sometimes been read as *al-qadar*. The first reading seems preferable as it corresponds to the rhyme of the surah, which is based on the schema consonant/vowel 'a'/non vocalized consonant/letter 'r' (*qadr, shahr, ʾamr, fajr*). According to some medieval Muslim scholars, verse 4 should be split into two, resulting in a total of six rather than five verses.; see R.D. Marcotte, "Night of Power", in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, vol. 3, pp. 537-539.

3   Counting only French translations of the Quran we have a large variety of terms for this mysterious holy night: 'la nuit de la destinée' (Blachère, Hamidullah), 'la nuit du décret' (Masson, Grosjean), 'la nuit du destin' (Khawam), 'la nuit grandiose' (Berque), 'la nuit de la prédétermination' (Abu-Sahlieh), 'la nuit sublime' (Ould Bah). The root of the word means 'power', 'might' (hence the title of the article of Marcotte mentioned at footnote 2) or also 'value', 'price', 'measurement'. See Kh. Azmoudeh, 'Nuit du Destin', in M.A. Amir-Moezzi (dir.), *Dictionnaire du Coran*, pp. 608-609.

surah, in whole or in part, has been the subject of a number of monographs.[4] From some studies, as the latest one well documented by Guillaume Dye, it appears more and more likely that it may derive from one or several Christian texts about the Night of the Nativity of Jesus.[5] My purpose here is not to examine the surah al-Qadr as such, nor even its 'prehistory', but rather to look at Shi'i perceptions of it and the doctrinal uses the Shi'is make of it; a subject which, as far as I know, has not yet been studied. However, as we shall see, parallels can be drawn between some Shi'i interpretations and the Christian origins of the Quranic text. Despite the mysterious, lapidary character of the surah, almost all Muslim commentators of the Quran have taken it to be about one of the crucial events of their religion, the revelation of the Holy Book. In doing so, they have drawn parallels between this surah and two other Quranic fragments: the beginning of verse 2:185 ("the month of Ramaḍān in which the Quran was revealed as a guide for all men …")[6] and the beginning of 44:3

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4   For example A.J. Wensinck, "Arabic New-Year and the Feast of Tabernacles", *Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam. Nieuwe reeks*. Deel 25/2, Amsterdam, 1925, pp. 1-17; S.D. Goitein, "Zur Entstehung des Ramaḍān", *Der Islam* 18 (1929), pp. 189-195 (article included and developed in "Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting", Id., *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*, Leiden, 1966, pp. 90-110); K. Wagtendonk, *Fasting in the Koran*, Leiden, 1968, pp. 82 *sqq.*, 92 *sqq.*, 112 *sqq.*; T. Lohmann, "Die Nacht al-Qadr. Übersetzung und Erklärung von Sure 97", *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 15 (1969), pp. 275-285; S.P. Manzoor, "From the Night of Power to the Dawn of Peace", *Afkar Inquiry* 3 (1986), pp. 28-33; I.A. Ahmad, "The Dawn Sky on *lailat ul-qadr*", *Archaeoastronomy* 11 (1989-93), pp. 97-100; M. Sells, "Sound, Spirit and Gender in *Sūrat al-Qadr*", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111/ 2 (1991), pp. 239-259; A. Alves, *A Noite do destino. Laylat al-qadr*, Lisbon, 1993; M. Cuypers, "Structures rhétoriques des sourates 92 à 98", *Annales Islamologiques* 34 (2000), pp. 95-138; Id., *Une apocalypse coranique. Une lecture des trente-trois dernières sourates du Coran*, Pendé (France), 2014, pp. 213-217; N. Sinai, 'Weihnachten im Koran' oder '"Nacht der Bestimmung'? Eine Interpretation von Sure 97", *Der Islam* 88 (2012), pp. 11-32.
5   G. Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation. The Rediscovery of a reliable Reconstruction of a comprehensive pre-Islamic Christian Hymnal hidden in the Koran under the earliest Islamic reinterpretation*, Delhi, 2002, pp. 147 *sqq.* (revised translation of: Id., *Über den Ur-Qur'ān. Ansätze zur Rekonstruktion vorislamischer christlicher Strophenlieder im Qur'ān*, Erlangen, 1974); G. Bassetti-Sani, *The Koran in the Light of Christ*, Chicago, 1977, pp. 153 *sqq.*; C. Luxenberg, "Noël dans le Coran", in A.M. Delcambre and J. Bosshard (eds.), *Enquêtes sur l'Islam. En hommage à Antoine Moussali*, Paris, 2004, pp. 117-138; G. Dye, 'La nuit du Destin et la nuit de la Nativité', in Id. and F. Nobilio (eds.), *Figures bibliques en islam*, Brussels-Fernelmont, 2011, pp. 107-169 (where in footnotes 3 and 4 other studies on the subject are listed). This thesis was already that of the Ethiopian Christian monk Enbāqom in the 16th century in his *Anqaṣa amīn* (*La porte de la foi*). *Apologie éthiopienne du christianisme contre l'Islam à partir du Coran*, translated by E.J. van Donzel, Leiden, 1969, p. 73 (quoted by M. Cuypers, *Une apocalypse coranique*, pp. 213-214).
6   *Shahr^u ramaḍān^a l-ladhī unzil^a fīhi l-qur'ān^u hud^an li-l-nās* …

("Indeed, We have revealed it [the illuminating Scripture of the previous verse] in a blessed night ...").[7] The study of these Quranic readings, along with that of some hadiths, has led, after some trial and error, to the traditional conclusion that surah 97 alludes to Muhammad's reception of the Divine Word through the intermediary of the Holy Spirit, identified with the angel Gabriel, during a night (generally an odd-numbered one) within the last ten days of the month of Ramaḍān. There is disagreement on the precise manner of delivery and content of this first revelation, just as on the exact date of the night. The fact remains that Muslims are called upon to make nocturnal vigils in the last ten days of the month of fasting so as not to 'miss' that 'blessed night' during which the gates of heaven seem open, communication with God easier, the answering of prayers more likely and the forgiveness of sins more certain. For mystics, the Night of Qadr has gradually become a "cypher" symbolizing the spiritual experience of transcendence, at whatever time of year it may occur.

2   Shiʿi Perceptions

Nevertheless, it seems that, to the ʿAlids, later to be called Shiʿis, the importance of the surah was different. Apparently from quite early, there appeared in Shiʿi communities a literary genre in which monographical collections of hadiths described the benefits to be derived from this chapter of the Quran. In an article on the subject, Hassan Ansari mentions three early examples: the *Faḍl sūrat innā anzalnāh* or *Thawāb innā anzalnāh* of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Kathīr al-Hāshimī, a disciple of imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (first half of the 2nd/8th century); the *Faḍl innā anzalnāh* of Abū Yaḥyā ʿUmar b. Tawba al-Ṣanʿānī (beginning 3rd/9th century); and the *Kitāb thawāb innā anzalnāh* of Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Ḥassān al-Rāzī al-Zaynabī (second half of the 3rd/9th century).[8] But these works, apparently all lost, did not, we can deduce, discuss the content of the surah, but simply the virtues of reciting it, as is also the case for a group of hadith which extoll 'the virtues and rewards of [reciting] the Quran (*faḍāʾil /thawāb al-Qurʾān*) in general.' On the other hand, the work which is the main subject of Ansari's article (in which however, Ansari says little about its actual content), is

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7   *Innā anzalnāhᵘ* [i.e. *al-kitāb al-mubīn*] *fī laylatⁱⁿ mubārakatⁱⁿ ...*

8   H. Ansari, "L'héritage ésotérique du chiisme: un livre sur l'exégèse de la sourate 97", *Arabica* 58 (2011), pp. 10-12 (the entire article, pp. 7-18). On the book of Ibn Kathīr al-Hāshimī see also H. Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival. A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shīʿite Literature*, vol. 1, Oxford, 2003, p. 172. For other information on the Night of Qadr in Shiʿi works, see E. Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work. Ibn Ṭāwūs and his Library*, Leiden, 1992, index. *s.v. laylat al-qadr.*

by a certain Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan b. al-ʿAbbās also known as Ibn al-Ḥarīsh al-Rāzī (probably beginning 3rd/9th century) and it would seem that this did discuss the content of the surah and its theological and imamological implications. It had, according to Shiʿi bibliographical and prosopographical works, a title which was more or less similar to those mentioned above. This work is lost too, but much of its contents have been recorded in later hadith compilations, amongst others by al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī in his *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt* and Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī in the "Kitāb al-Ḥujja" of his monumental *Kitāb al-Kāfī*.[9] Indeed, the center of gravity of the Shiʿi doctrine of the Night of Qadr resides in imamology. This Quranic chapter may even be said to provide one of the most solid proofs of the Shiʿi theory of the imamate.

A disciple asks imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) about the Night of Qadr during which the angels and the Spirit descend. The imam replies with another question: "On whose behalf do these beings come, what do they bring and to whom?" (*mimman wa ilā man wa mā yanzilu?*)[10] The answer is provided by a great number of traditions. According to one of them, Ibn al-Ḥarīsh (whom we have already met) records the following teaching of his master, the ninth imam Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Jawād (d. 220/835): "God created the Night of Qadr at the origin of the creation of the world; and during that night He created the first prophet (*nabī*) as well as the first legatee [*waṣī*, i.e. imam]; and He decreed that during that night knowledge of the events of the coming year would descend from heaven. He who denies this night, denies the Knowledge of God, for the proof of the truthfulness of the prophets, of the messengers and of the inspired men (*muḥaddathūn*), is indeed what the angel Gabriel brings to them during that night ... And this since the very first day of the creation of the earth until the disappearance of the world ... Thus it was during this night

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9 Ansari, *ibid.*, pp. 13-18 (on other early sources referred to by Ibn al-Ḥarīsh, see p. 17, footnote 41); see also id., *L'imamat et l'occultation selon l'imamisme*, pp. 156-165 and 49-61 of Arabic texte. On al-Ṣaffār, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummî (m. 290/902-3) et son *Kitâb Baṣâ'ir al-darajât*", *Journal Asiatique* 280/3-4 (1992), pp. 221-250; a more developed version is in Id., *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 4; A.J. Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shīʿism. Hadith as Discourse Between Qum and Baghdad*, Richmond, 2000, chapters 5 and 7. On al-Kulaynī, see Id., *op.cit.*, chapters 4 and 7 and especially M.A. Amir-Moezzi & H. Ansari, "Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī (m. 328 ou 329/939-40 ou 940-41) et son *Kitāb al-Kāfī*. Une introduction", *Studia Iranica* 38-2 (2009), pp. 191-247; a fuller version is in M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 5; and Id., *La Preuve de Dieu, passim*.

10 Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt fī ʿulūm āl Muḥammad*, ed. ʿA. Zakīzādeh Ranānī, Qumm, 2 vols., 1391 solar/2012, section 5, chap. 3 ("bāb mā yulqī ilā l-aʾimma fī laylat al-qadr"), vol. 1, p. 783, tradition no. 6; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, Tehran-Qumm, 110 tomes in 90 vols., 1376-1392/1956-1972, vol. 94, p. 23, tradition no. 53.

that the Spirit and the angels brought the Order to Adam; and then after his death it was passed on to his legatee imam [i.e. Seth/Shīth] and from the time of Adam the Order was passed down to Muḥammad, who passed it on to his own legatee [i.e. ʿAlī] …"[11]

According to another tradition, the same Ibn al-Ḥarīsh showed his collection of hadiths to the same ninth imam, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Jawād, who accepted the authenticity of the work and told al-Ḥarīsh a saying of the sixth imam, Jaʿfar, which quoted in turn the first imam ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661): "In the morning of the first Night of Qadr following the death of the Messenger of God [Muḥammad], ʿAlī declared [to his followers]: 'Ask me and I shall inform you of what will happen during three hundred and sixty days [i.e. the events of the year to come], from the [spiritual] World of Particles (al-dharr) to what is found above it and beneath it [i.e. the entire universe]. And this without any difficulty, personal opinion or pretention; and all this has been taught to me by God …'"[12] Elsewhere, in a hadith of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, the same ʿAlī is said to have often declared: "Once the man from the al-Taym tribe and his companion [i.e. Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, the two future first caliphs][13] were with the Messenger of God; the latter recited Surah al-Qadr in a state of extreme humility and sadness. They asked him the reason for this: 'Why does this surah move you so

11   Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, ed. J. Muṣṭafawī, 4 vol., Tehran, s.d. (vol. 4 dates from 1386/1966), "Kitāb al-ḥujja", bāb fī shaʾn innā anzalnāh fī laylat al-qadr wa tafsīrihā, vol. 1, pp. 366-368, no. 7. On the succession of the prophets and the legatee imams and the central notion of "Legacy" (*al-waṣiyya*), see U. Rubin, "Pre-existence and light. Aspects of the concept of Nūr Muḥammad", *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975), pp. 62-119; Id., "Prophets and Progenitors in Early Shīʿa Tradition", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 1 (1979), pp. 41-65; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, part II-2 ("L'humanité adamique. Le 'voyage' de la lumière"), pp. 96 sqq. and index *s.v.* On the *muḥaddath*, see E. Kohlberg, "The Term 'Muḥaddath' in Twelver Shīʿism", in *Studia Orientalia memoriae D.H. Baneth dedicata*, Jerusalem, 1979, pp. 39-47, (included in Id., *Belief and Law in Imāmī-Shīʿism*, Variorum, Aldershot, 1991, article 5 and now id., *In Praise of the Few*, Leiden-Boston, 2020, chapter 13); M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, index s.v.

12   Al-Saffār, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 786-787, no. 12; al-Majlisī, *op.cit.*, vol. 94, p. 20, no. 44. On the World of Particles (*ʿālam al-dharr*), also known as the World of Shadows (*ʿālam al-aẓilla*) or also the World of the Pact (*ʿālam al-mīthāq*), see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, part II-1 ("Les mondes d'avant le monde. Le Guide-Lumière"), pp. 75 *sqq.* in particular pp. 80 *sqq.*; Id., "Worlds and Their Inhabitants. Some Notes on Imami-Shīʿī Cosmo-Anthropogony", in E. Coda and C. Martini Bonadeo (eds.), *De l'Antiquité tardive au Moyen Age*, pp. 519-529.

13   Variant: the man of al-Taym and the man of al-ʿAdī, respectively the names of two clans of the tribe of Quraysh from which Abū Bakr and ʿUmar come. The label is intended to be contemptuous. On the pejorative labels used by the adversaries of ʿAlī in Shīʿī literature see E. Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī Shīʿī Views on the ṣaḥāba", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5 (1984), pp. 143-175 (= *Belief and Law*, article 9 and now id., *In Praise of the Few*, chapter 3).

much?' The Prophet replied: 'Because of what my eyes beheld [on the Night of Qadr] and what my heart has understood and also because of what his – that is ʿAlī's – heart will see [in that night]'. They asked him: 'What did you see and what shall he see?' The Prophet replied: 'Has not God declared [in this surah] that in this Night, the angels and the Spirit descend with the permission of their Lord for all order? … Towards whom do they descend to convey him the Order (*al-amr*) of all things?' '– Towards you, oh Messenger of God.' '– But after my death, there will be other Nights of Qadr when the Order will descend to earth, will there not?' '– Indeed … and on whom will it descend after you?' The Prophet then put his hand on my head [it is ʿAlī who is speaking] and declared: 'After me, it will be this man'."[14]

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Kathīr, again, records a saying of imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (was this tradition part of the collection attributed to the former, mentioned above?): "When the Messenger of God died, the angel Gabriel came down to earth in company of the angels who come down on the Night of Qadr. Then the inner eye of the Commander of the Faithful [i.e. ʿAlī] was opened (*fa-futiḥa li-amīr al-muʾminīn baṣaruhu*) and he saw them at the ends of the heavens and of the earth … And when the Messenger of God was laid in his grave, the [inner] hearing of the Commander of the Faithful was opened (*futiḥa li-amīr al-muʾminīn samʿahu*) and he heard the Messenger recommend him [to the celestial beings] weeping and they replied: 'Fear not! They [i.e. the adversaries of ʿAlī] will not reach him! After you, he is indeed our companion'. And when ʿAlī left this world, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn were witnesses to the same event in which the Prophet and ʿAlī came to recommend them to the celestial beings [and the hadith repeats the same narrative about the following imams: ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī to finally arrive at the speaker, Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad] … and Mūsā (my son) [the seventh imam] shall see the same thing at the time of my death and it shall be so until the last one of us (*hākadhā yajrī ilā ākhirinā*)."[15]

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14 Al-Ṣaffār, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 792-794, no. 16; slightly different version in al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, "Kitāb al-ḥujja", *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 363-364, no. 5; al-Astarābādī, Sharaf al-Dīn, *Taʾwīl al-āyāt al-ẓāhira*, Qumm, 1417/1997, p. 792 and 795; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 94, p. 21, no. 47.

15 Al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir*, ibid., pp. 794-795, no. 17; see also al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa l-jarāʾiḥ*, Qumm, 1409/1988-89, vol. 2, pp. 778-779, no. 102; al-Baḥrānī, Hāshim b. Sulaymān, *Madīnat maʿājiz al-aʾimma al-ithnay ʿashar* (or *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*), Qumm, 1413/1992, vol. 3, p. 47, no. 713; Id., *Yanābīʿ al-maʿājiz*, Qumm, s.d., p. 158; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 22, p. 513, no. 13 and vol. 27, p. 289, no. 3; al-Ḥuwayzī, *tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn*, Qumm, 1412/1991, vol. 5, p. 64, no. 110. The title of *amīr al-muʾminīn*, which we have translated as "Commander of the Faithful", is, in Shiʿism, exclusively reserved for ʿAlī (even the other imams cannot use it). It can also be translated as "Commander or Head of the Initiates" if one opts for the

To the question of a disciple asking him if the Night of Qadr could exist after Muḥammad, imam Jaʿfar is said to have replied: "If the Night of Qadr were to be abolished that would mean that the Quran is abolished (*law rufiʿat laylat al-qadr lā rufiʿa l-Qurʾān*)."[16]

The reasoning behind these traditions is as follows: the Night of Qadr is a cosmic event, decreed by God at the dawn of creation to endure until the end of times. As the Quran says clearly, it is during that single night of the year that God sends to the prophets and after them to their imams, through the intermediary of His celestial messengers, the knowledge of the decrees which will govern the universe during the coming year. This "Order", begun with Adam, continues with Muḥammad and his sole legitimate successors, namely ʿAlī and the imams of his descendance.[17] The conclusion is that ʿAlī and the imams are the only true successors of Muḥammad in all aspects of his mission, including prophecy, which is the ability to communicate with God through the intermediary of the heavenly beings. I shall return to this.

This reasoning seems irrefutable to the eyes of Shiʿis, but also, if one is to believe certain traditions, to other Muslims, if they are impartial, given the manifest superiority in terms of knowledge and moral integrity of ʿAlī and his descendants to all other Companions of the Prophet. For example, a long hadith recorded by al-Kulaynī at the head of his chapter on this subject, set in Mecca during the pilgrimage, is a dialogue between the fifth imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 115 or 119/732 or 737) and a mysterious figure who tests his knowledge. When the imam has replied successfully to the many questions, the questioner reveals his identity: he is the prophet Elijah (Ilyās), descended from heaven to assist the imam and his followers in their difficult mission, in an environment dominated by their enemies. In the middle of the narrative, Ilyās asks al-Bāqir if he wishes to learn a decisive and irrefutable argument with which to convince his adversaries. The imam replies to him that he knows this argument, which is none other than the inevitable conclusion to be drawn from surah al-Qadr.[18] Moreover, those who believe that an original complete version of the Holy Book was forged to make what is now the official version

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technical meaning of the word *muʾmin* in Shiʿism, that is the faithful initiated into the esoteric teachings of the imams (see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, index *s.v.*).

16   Al-Kulaynī, *al-Furūʿ min al-Kāfī*, ed. ʿA.A. Ghaffārī, Tehran, 1391/1971, "Kitāb al-ṣiyām", bāb fī laylat al-qadr, vol. 4, p. 158, no. 7.

17   The tradition that depicts Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, next to the Prophet and ʿAlī, is obviously meant to stress the figure of ʿAlī as the sole successor to Muḥammad as well as the illegitimacy of the first two. On this subject see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 1.

18   Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, "Kitāb al-ḥujja", *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 350-357, no. 1 (tradition reported by Ibn al-Ḥarīsh from imam Muḥammad al-Jawād).

of the Quran, also believe that this original complete version explicitly mentions that fact. Here is this version, deemed to be the real revelation given to Muḥammad, reported by al-Sayyārī (3rd/9th century) in his *Kitāb al-Qirāʾāt* ("Book of the variants of Quranic readings"), also known as *al-Tanzīl wa l-taḥrīf* ("Revelation and Falsification"). The words that do not appear in the canonical version of the Quran are in italics:

1. Indeed We sent it down on the Night of Qadr
2. And what shall teach thee what is the Night of Qadr?
3. The Night of Qadr is better than a thousand months *that do not contain the Night of Qadr* (*laysa fīhā laylatᵘ l-qadr*)![19]
4. In it the angels and the Spirit descend, by the leave of their Lord, *with* (*bi-kull* instead of "for" *min kull*) every Order *for Muḥammad and the progeny of Muḥammad* (*ʿalā Muḥammadⁱⁿ wa āl Muḥammad*/ variant: for the legatees [*ʿalā l-awṣiyāʾ*])
5. "Peace it is, until the rising of dawn."[20]

3 The Master of the Order

It seems that for Shi'is, the Night of Qadr is that of the 21st or 23rd of the month of Ramaḍān. Many traditions are in agreement with this.[21] Indeed, as has been

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19 In a certain number of traditions, the "thousand months" are interpreted as being the duration of the reign of the Umayyads; see for example al-Qummī, ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm, *Tafsīr*, ed. Ṭ. al-Mūsawī al-Jazāʾirī, re-ed. Beirut, 1411/1991, vol. 2, p. 466; Ibn al-Juḥām, *Taʾwīl*, ed. F. Tabrīziyān, Qumm, 1420/1999, p. 463; al-Astarābādī, *Taʾwīl al-āyāt al-ẓāhira*, pp. 790-791; al-Baḥrānī, Hāshim b. Sulaymān, *al-Burhān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, Teheran, 1374-75/1954-55, vol. 4, p. 487, no. 20; as for Sunni exegeses (recording nevertheless the tradition from the Shi'i imam al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī): al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, Cairo, 1388/1968, vol. 30, p. 260; al-Thaʿālibī, *Jawāhir al-ḥisān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, ed. ʿA.M. Muʿawwaḍ et al., Beirut, 1418/1997, vol. 10, p. 257; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr fī l-tafsīr al-maʾthūr*, Beirut, 1411/1990, vol. 6, p. 629.

20 Al-Sayyārī, *Kitāb al-Qirāʾāt*, ed. E. Kohlberg & M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification*, pp. 186-187 (Arabic text), n°s 674 and 678 and pp. 275 and 276 (English text for the same numbers) for the other sources and discussions of this version of the Quran. See also W. St Clair-Tisdall, "Shī'ah Additions to the Koran", *The Moslem World* 3 (1913), p. 240 (all of the article: pp. 227-241); A. Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qurʾān*, Leiden, 1937, p. 110. On the question of the falsification of the Quran, see now the introduction by E. Kohlberg-M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification*, parts 1 to 3; also M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 2. On *min kulli amr/bi-kulli amr* see also G. Dye, "La nuit du Destin et la nuit de la Nativité", pp. 132 sqq.

21 Al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir, ibid.*, pp. 780-781, no 3 and pp. 785-786, no 11; al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl, ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 368-370, n° 8 (*in fine*); Id., *Furūʿ, ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 156, n°s 1 and 2 and p. 158, n° 8. Also M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, p. 179, footnote 353. Particular emphasis is laid on the

already stressed, this date is not certain. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq is quoted as saying: "the 19th night [of Ramaḍān] is that of decision (*taqdīr*); i.e. God's decision concerning the decrees for the coming year (*taqdīr* is from the same root as *qadr*), the 21st night is that of the confirmation (*ibrām*) and the 23rd night is that of the implementation (*imḍāʾ*)."[22] What is one to understand about the Night of Qadr as such? In reality, this point seems quite secondary compared to the other issues raised by the Night of Qadr. Two other, in principle important, elements are remarkable by their almost total absence, especially in the early Shiʿi corpus: first, the fact that the Quran was said to have been revealed that night, second that the dates of the fatal injury and death of ʿAlī coincide with the presumed dates of the Night of Qadr.[23]

Indeed, two other events give this Night major doctrinal importance. First, it is when God decides the great events of the coming year, decrees them and sends them down in His Order (*al-amr*). Then, the Order is received on earth by a Divine Man called the Master of the Order (*ṣāḥib al-amr*) whose presence in the world is a cosmic spiritual necessity.

"It is during the Night of Qadr", imam Jaʿfar reportedly said, "that the good and the evil of the entire year is written down (*yuktab*), death or life, rain or even the caravans of pilgrims to Mecca; and then it comes down to earth". The disciple: "To who on earth?" The imam: "To he who stands before you [i.e. myself, the present imam]."[24]

A disciple asks the same imam to explain the surah of Qadr. "In that night, Jaʿfar replies, while people perform canonical prayers [*ṣalāt*], invocations [*duʿāʾ*] and supplications [*masʾala*], the Master of the Order [*ṣāḥib hādha l-amr*; i.e. the Order that has come down during the unfolding night] is absorbed in his own occupations [*fī shughlin*]; [the imam deliberately reveals nothing about the nature of those occupations] and then the angels descend upon him

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refutation of the date of the 15th of the month of Shaʿbān as being that of the Night of Qadr, as some thought; the latter date corresponds traditionally to another famous Night, the *laylat al-barāʾa*; for discussions of this see S. Goitein, "Zur Entstehung des Ramaḍān", pp. 192 sq.; G.E. von Grunebaum, *Muḥammadan Festivals*, London-Ottawa, 1976, pp. 53 sq.

22   Al-Kulaynī, *Furūʿ, ibid.*, p. 159, n° 9.

23   Al-Kulaynī records only a single tradition about the revelation of the Quran in his *Uṣūl* (*ibid.*, n° 4) and his *Furūʿ* (*ibid.*, n° 5). The event does not seem to have any particular importance for al-Ṣaffār, given that not a single one of the 17 traditions from the chapter devoted to the Night of Qadr in his *Baṣāʾir* deigns to mention it. Things will eventually change in later works. And the link between the Night of Qadr and the assassination and death of ʿAlī seems to be a recent phenomenon (see R.D. Marcotte, "Night of Power" see above footnote 2, p. 538 b).

24   Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir, ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 778-779, n° 1; al-Baḥrānī, *Yanābīʿ al-maʿājiz*, p. 152; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 94, p. 22, n° 48.

from sunset until the break of day, entrusting to him everything that concerns the [coming] year. That Night is Peace for him."[25]

A follower asks the same Ja'far the explanation of Quranic verse 44:4 (which that classic commentary links to surah al-Qadr, as we have seen): "In this night all wise order is distinguished" [*fīhā yufraqᵘ kullᵘ amrⁱⁿ ḥakīm*]. Ja'far is said to have replied: "It is in the Night of Qadr during which successes and failures, the piety or the faults, death or life are written down and everything God decides to accomplish during night and day and then He makes it all known to the Master of the Earth [*ṣāḥib al-arḍ*]". The disciple: "And who is that?" The imam: "Your master [i.e. myself]."[26]

Imam Muḥammad al-Jawād reportedly said: "God said regarding the Night of Qadr: 'In this night all wise order is distinguished' [Quran 44:4] ... Indeed, in the Night of Qadr the detailed explanation [*tafsīr*] of events which will occur during the year as well as the Order which he must execute out concerning himself and others in such and such case, descends to the Holder of the Order [*walī al-amr*] ..."[27]

Imam Ja'far is said to have passed down the following hadith from his father Muḥammad al-Bāqir: "'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib recited surah al-Qadr in the presence of his two sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. The latter then told him: 'Father, it seems to me that this surah produces a special gentleness in you!' 'Alī: 'Yes, son of the Messenger of God and my son, for I know something about it which you do not. When this surah was revealed, your grandfather, the Messenger of God, summoned me and recited it to me. Then he struck my right shoulder and declared: "'Alī, my brother, my legatee, patron (*walī*) of my community after me, who will combat my enemies until the Day of Resurrection! After me, this surah concerns only you and your descendants. The angel Gabriel, who is my

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25   Al-Ṣaffār, *ibid.*, pp. 779-780, n° 2; al-Baḥrānī, *op.cit.*, p. 152; al-Huwayzī, *Tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn*, vol. 5, p. 64, n° 113.

26   Al-Ṣaffār, *ibid.*, pp. 781-782, n° 4 (see also n°s 7, 8 et 10); al-Baḥrānī, *op. cit.*, p. 153 (see also p. 154); al-Majlisī, *op. cit.*, vol. 94, p. 23, n° 51 (see also n°s 54, 55 and footnote); al-Ḥuwayzī, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 625, n° 20 (see also vol. 5, p. 639, n° 106). Here is the beginning of surah 44: "Ḥ M / By the illuminating Writ / We have sent it down during a blessed night, We are indeed warners / During (this night) all wise order is determined / An order coming from Us, We are indeed senders". (*ḥā' mīm/ wa l-kitābⁱ l-mubīn/innā anzalnāhᵘ fī laylatⁱⁿ mubāraka innā kunnā mundhirīn/fīhā yufraqᵘ kullu amrⁱⁿ ḥakīm/amrᵘⁿ min 'indinā innā mursilīn*).

27   Al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl, ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 360, n° 3 (in the last sentence, there is obviously a play on words with terms deriving from the root ʾMR and around the word *amr* (Order) which is one of the central ideas of the entire doctrine): ... *la yanzilu fī laylat al-qadr ilā walī al-amr tafsīr al-umūr sanatan sanatan yuʾmaru fīhā fī amr nafsih bi-kadhā wa kadhā wa fī amr al-nās bi-kadhā wa kadhā* ...

brother, has informed me of the events of the year which will follow the revela-
tion of this surah and it will be so for you and your family, as (it is) in the matter
of prophecy [*ka-iḥdāth al-nubuwwa*]. This surah is a shining light in your heart
and in the heart of your legatees [i.e. the imams of your descendants] until 'the
break of day' of the imam Resurrector [*al-qāʾim*; i.e. until the end of times]."'"[28]

In such a context, the Night of Qadr can be understood as being that of
Destiny, or rather that of the Decree or decrees issued by God. However, ideas
about this Night in early Shiʿi hermeneutics are more complex and make the
translation of the word by a single term problematic. Indeed, it is his knowl-
edge, his initiatory science, his *ʿilm*[29] which makes the man of God the Master
of the Order, the one worthy to receive the Divine Decree in the blessed Night,
"God offers the imam", Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq reportedly said, "the first Science and the
last Science (*al-ʿilm al-awwal wa l-ʿilm al-ākhir*)"; he thus "becomes worthy of
the visit of the Spirit in the Night of Qadr [*istaḥaqqa ziyārat al-rūḥ fī laylat
al-qadr*]."[30]

The knowledge received by the imam through celestial revelation in this
Night has three aspects: the events which will take place during the year, from
one Night of Qadr to the other, the deep meaning (*maʿānin*) and the detailed
explanations (*tafāsīr*) of what the imam already knows in succinct form
(*mujmal*), finally 'another knowledge' which the imam has been ordered to
keep secret.[31]

There is a tradition about the sixth imam Jaʿfar, recorded by Ibn al-Ḥarīsh
from the ninth imam Muḥammad al-Jawād Abū Jaʿfar the Second, which reads
as follows: "Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq: 'The heart that has the vision of what comes down
in the Night of Qadr is of a sublime rank'. The disciple: 'How does this occur, oh

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28   Ibn al-Juḥām, *Taʾwīl*, pp. 463-464; al-Astarābādī, *Taʾwīl al-āyāt al-ẓāhira*, pp. 793-794. In
       this tradition, the Quranic expression "until the rising of dawn" is interpreted as an allu-
       sion to the future coming of the Shiʿi Messiah of the end times. And the somehow enig-
       matic expression *iḥdāth al-nubuwwa* is sufficiently clear to show that the mission of the
       imams is identical to that of Muḥammad, a prophetic mission.

29   On this idea central to Shiʿi religion see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, part III-2,
       pp. 174 *sqq.*; Id., *La religion discrète*, index s.v. *ʿālim, ʿilm, mutaʿallim*.

30   Al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir*, p. 788, no 13, *in fine* (variant: *ziyāda* instead of *ẓiyāra*: "he becomes wor-
       thy of the Spirit adding itself to him"); see also al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 25, p. 37, n° 4.

31   Apart from the chapters already mentioned from al-Ṣaffār and al-Kulaynī, see al-Nuʿmānī,
       Kitāb al-Ghayba, text and Persian translation of M.J. al-Ghaffārī, Tehran, 1363 solar/1985,
       pp. 9 *sqq.* On the ideas of condensed and detailed knowledge, see Ibn Bābūya, *ʿUyūn
       akhbār al-Riḍā*, ed. M.Ḥ. Lājevardī, Tehran, 1378/1958, vol. 1, pp. 14 *sqq.*; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*,
       vol. 8, p. 208 and the study of E. Kohlberg, "Imam and Community in the Pre-Ghayba
       Period", in S. Amir-Arjomand (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shīʿism*, New York,
       1988, pp. 28 *sqq.* (all of the article: pp. 25-53 = *Belief and Law*, article no. 13). On the secret
       science, al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl*, Kitāb al-ḥujja, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 366-370, nos 7 and 8.

Abū ʿAbdallāh [the *kunya* of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq]?' The imam: 'By God, the belly of his person is split, his heart is seized and on it is written all the knowledge with an ink made of light. The heart then becomes a book for the inner eye and the tongue interprets it for the ear. If the person [who receives the vision] wishes to know something, he looks at this heart with the inner eye, and [he sees in it] as if he were to read in a book ...'"[32]

Such a man as we have seen, is blessed with the descent of the Spirit/Holy Spirit/angel Gabriel. The importance of his spiritual rank is stressed by another hadith from the father of Jaʿfar, the fifth imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir: "... We [the imams] cannot miss the Night of Qadr [literally: the Night of Qadr cannot be hidden from us] because [in that Night] the angels come to circumambulate us."[33]

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32   Al-Ṣaffār, *op.cit.*, pp. 789-790, no. 14 (Abū ʿAbdallāh: *inna l-qalb alladhī yuʿāyinu mā yan-zilu fī laylat al-qadr la-ʿaẓīm al-shaʾn ... yushaqqu wa llāhi baṭn dhālik al-rajul thumma yuʾkhadhu qalbahu wa yuktabu ʿalā qalb dhālik al-rajul bi-madād al-nūr jamīʿ al-ʿilm thumma yakūnu l-qalb muṣḥafan li-l-baṣar wa yakūnu l-lisān mutarjiman li-l-udhn idhā arāda dhālik al-rajul ʿilm shayʾin naẓara bi-baṣarihi qalbahu fa-ka-ʾannahu yanẓuru fī kitāb*); also al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 94, p. 2, no. 45. The tradition alludes to numerous important initiatory ideas and practices: first of all the heart as the organ of spiritual vision (see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, part II-3 [Excursus: vision by the heart]); then the phrase "to have a split belly", with the use of the verb *shaqqa*, inevitably reminds one of the two prophetic wonders traditionally linked to the life of Muḥammad, his miracle of "splitting the moon" (*shaqq al-qamar*) and his supernatural initiation described by the Quranic expression "the opening of the chest" (*sharḥ* or *inshirāḥ al-ṣadr*). The use of *shaqq* instead of *sharḥ* and of *baṭn* (belly) instead of *ṣadr* seems to be a type of "tactical dissimulation" (*taqiyya*) to prevent adversaries from accusing the imams of claiming the same rank as the Prophet (see here previous chapter). Finally, it is interesting to note that the tradition does not speak specifically about a prophet or an imam. On the contrary, there appears to be particular insistence on the use of the expression *dhālik al-rajul*, "that man" (which I have translated as "person"), in this case the one whose heart has been made capable of vision during the Night of Qadr. Are we dealing with just any initiated faithful described in Shiʿi literature by the technical expression "the initiate whose heart has been tested by God for the faith" (*al-muʾmin qad imtaḥana llāhu qalbahu li-l-īmān*)? (see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *La religion discrète*, index *s.v.*); on this last question see the subtle analyses of Ch. Jambet, "Religion du savant et religion du vulgaire. Remarques sur les intentions du commentaire du Livre de la preuve de Mullā Ṣadrā", *Studia Islamica* 109-2 (2014), pp. 208-239.

33   Al-Ṣaffār, *op.cit*, p. 782, no 5; ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 466; al-Baḥrānī, *Yanābīʿ al-maʿājiz*, p. 153; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 94, p. 23, no. 52; al-Ḥuwayzī, *Tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn*, vol. 4, p. 62, no. 9. Here the term for "turning around", namely *yuṭīfūn*, is the one used to express the circumambulations of the pilgrims around the Kaʿba (the *ṭawāf*). The tradition also seems to mean that the imams can "see" the angels during the night of Qadr, another extraordinary power traditionally reserved for the prophets (on this delicate issue, which will later become the theologically important distinguishing trait between a messenger prophet – *rasūl*-, a "simple" prophet -*nabī* – and an *imam/muḥaddath*, see next chapter).

This Night is thus the moment when divine power is transmitted as knowledge to the Divine Man and enables him in turn to exercise his own spiritual power. So, in this respect, the Night of Qadr can legitimately be translated as "the Night of Power". However, this Night, despite all the peace and blessing that accompany it, is, as the Quran stresses, not the only "moment" when the imam receives knowledge from the heavenly powers: "… Just as in the Night of Qadr, the Holder of the Order (*walī al-amr*) can be seized by the Knowledge of God the Most High at any moment [literally: every day, *kull yawm*]: the particular, secret, marvelous, sealed Divine Knowledge (*ʿilm allāh al-khāṣṣ al-maknūn al-ʿajīb al-makhzūn*)."[34]

As we saw in the previous chapter, al-Kulaynī, in the same *Book of the Proof* (K. al-Ḥujja) of his *Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, devotes an entire chapter to the frequent visits which the angels make to the imams. The title cannot be more explicit: "the angels enter the homes of the imams, tread upon their carpets and bring them information" (*inna l-aʾimma tadkhulu l-malāʾika buyūtahum wa taṭaʾu busuṭahum wa taʾtīhim bi-l-akhbār*).[35] Thus, heaven comes down to the imam. He is capable, reciprocally, like Muḥammad, of celestial ascension to renew and increase his knowledge, and, to be precise, every Thursday to Friday night. It is the "acquired science of the night of Friday" (*al-ʿilm al-mustafād fī laylat al-jumuʿa*) which the imam gathers from the Divine Throne, in the company of the spirits of the prophets, the imams and the sages of the past.[36]

The communications of the angelic beings and the initiation received at the ascension to the Divine Throne are the heavenly sources of the Sacred Knowledge of the imam. But they are not the only ones. He also has access to a certain number of sources which may be qualified as occult (the column of light, the force that brands his heart or those that pierce his eardrum, all kinds of occult sciences), written sources (the Sacred Scriptures of previous religions, the complete original version of the Quran, Secret Books containing many sorts of information about the past, present and future, etc.) and, finally, oral sources, the teachings that each imam has received from his predecessor.[37]

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34   Al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl, ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 260, no 3; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 94, p. 27, no. 68.

35   Al-Kulaynī, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 24 *sqq.*

36   Al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir*, section 3, chap. 8 (bāb mā yazdādu l-aʾimma fī laylat al-jumuʿa min al-ʿilm al-mustafād), vol. 1, pp. 48 *sqq.*; al-Kulaynī, *op.cit.*, "bāb fī anna l-aʾimma yazdādūn fī laylat al-jumuʿa ʿilman", vol. 1, pp. 37 sqq.; on this subject see my monograph: "L'imam dans le ciel. Ascension et initiation (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine III)", in M.A. Amir-Moezzi (ed.), *Le voyage initiatique en terre d'islam*, pp. 99-116 (= *La religion discrète*, chap. 5).

37   See M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, partie III-2 ("La Science sacrée"), pp. 174-199, in particular pp. 175-190 on the sources of initiatory knowledge. On the Secret Books of the imams, see also E. Kohlberg, "Authoritative Scriptures in Early Imāmī Shiʿism", in

Contrary to what classical Sunni commentators in their great majority profess, for the Shiʿis it is not the Quran which is at the centre of gravity of the 97th surah. For them, especially if one focusses on the early corpus of hadiths, the Quranic text refers to the privileged moment when the imam receives the inspired knowledge, the gnosis, in Late Antiquity's sense of the term, the saving and transformative knowledge. This surah does not principally describe the circumstances of the revelation of the Quran to Muḥammad, but, first and foremost, those of all such revelations made and yet to be made, perpetually, from the dawn of creation until the end of times, to the succeeding imams, "Masters of the Order" (*awliyāʾ al-amr*). At the close of the long dialogue between Elijah and imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir, the prophet says that the adversaries of the imams and their followers believe is that the surah al-Qadr declares the Proof of God (*ḥujjat allāh*) and that the Proof of God is nothing but the Quran. The imam then replies: "I would tell them [these adversaries] that the Quran cannot speak to order or prohibit [*inna l-Qurʾān laysa bi-nāṭiq yaʾmur wa yanha*]; but the Quran has [speaking] men who can order and prohibit [*wa lākin li-l-Qurʾān ahlun yaʾmurūn wa yanhawn*]. And I would tell them also that calamities may occur to men [literally: the inhabitants of the earth] which neither the Quran, nor the Tradition, nor any authoritative decree could have foreseen. Now the knowledge of God and His justice cannot tolerate that such a tragedy should afflict humanity and that there would be none to put an end to it and deliver them from it."[38]

It is precisely in this sense that early Shiʿi interpretations of this surah can be compared to its probable "subtext", namely a text about Jesus Christ (see above the relevant text to footnote 5). The surah does not concern the Word of God in the shape of a revelation or of a Book but in the shape of a human manifestation, that is the *logos*, the Word Incarnate in the case of Christ, "the Speaking Quran" in the case of the Imam. A parallel may also be drawn with another early Shiʿi interpretation of the Night of Qadr (far less frequent in Imamism, it is true), where this Night is said to symbolise Fāṭima. In it, there is, on the one hand "subtext" about the night of the Nativity of Jesus, and on the other, a text about "the Mother of the imams", in Shiʿism constantly compared to the figure

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E. Patlagean and A. Le Boulluec (eds.), *Les retours aux Écritures. Fondamentalismes présents et passés*, pp. 295-312.

38   Al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl, ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 355-356. The tradition is an illustration, among many others, of the Shiʿi doctrinal duality of concepts that define the Quran as a silent, dumb book or guide (*kitāb/imām ṣāmit*) and the imam as a speaking book or Quran (*kitāb/qurʾān nāṭiq*); for more on this duality and its religious implications and sources, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 3, part 1, pp. 101 sqq.

of Mary. However, the symbolism remains enigmatic and it has been subjected to various hermeneutics by Shiʿi mystics as well as by modern scholars.[39]

Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, yet again, is reported to have said:[40] "*Indeed, We sent it down on the Night of Qadr* [the quotes from Quran 97 are in italics]: the Night is Fāṭima and al-Qadr is God. He who understands the reality of Fāṭima grasps [the reality] of the Night of Qadr. She is called Fāṭima because all created beings are replete with her knowledge.[41] *And what will teach thee what is the Night of Qadr? / The Night of Qadr is better than a thousand months!* That is to say that [she is] better than a thousand initiates (*muʾmin*) for she is the Mother of the initiates [see above footnote 15]. *In it the angels and the Spirit descend*: the angels here are the initiates who possess the initiatory science [*ʿilm*; see above footnote 29 and the relevant text] of the descendants of Muḥammad [i.e. the imams]. The Spirit, that is the Holy Spirit, is Fāṭima. *By the leave of their Lord, upon every command / Peace it is, until the rising of dawn*: that is to say until the rising of the Resurrector."[42]

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39   See now L. Massignon, *Écrits mémorables*, ed. under the direction of Ch. Jambet, Paris, 2009, vol. 1, 2nd part, "Marie et Fâtima" (all the articles), pp. 211-289; J. Dammen McAuliffe, "Chosen of All Women: Mary and Fātimah in Qurʾānic Exegesis", *Islamochristiana* 7 (1981), pp. 19-38; D.L. Soufi, "Fāṭima in Classical Muslim Thought", unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Princeton, 1997; V. Klemm, "Image formation of an Islamic legend. Fāṭima, the daughter of the prophet Muḥammad", in S. Günther (ed.), *Ideas, images, and methods of portrayal. Insights into classical Arabic literature and Islam*, Leiden – Boston, 2005, pp. 181-208; B. Beinhauer-Köhler, *Fāṭima bint Muḥammad. Metamorphosen einer frühislamischen Frauengestalt*, Wiesbaden, 2002, *passim*; C.P. Clohessy, *Fâtima, Daughter of Muḥammad*, Piscataway, 2013 (2018²), chapter 4, pp. 217-292. For interpretations of this symbolism in Shiʿi esotericism, see sources and studies mentioned in footnote 42 below.

40   Furāt b. Ibrāhīm al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr*, ed. M. al-Kāẓim, Tehran, 1410/1990, pp. 581-582, no. 2; al-Astarābādī, *Taʾwīl al-āyāt al-ẓāhira*, pp. 791-792.

41   The text plays with the meaning of the root FṬM, which means literally 'to wean, to stop breast feeding' However I am not sure I have properly understood the meaning of this phrase and to have translated it properly: *wa innamā sumiyat Fāṭima li-anna l-khalq fuṭimū ʿan* (ou *min*) *maʿrifatihā*. The second part of sentence can also be understood to mean the contrary: "… because created beings [i.e. the mass of people, the majority, the non-Shiʿis?] have not been blessed with her knowledge" (for this second understanding see M.M. Bar-Asher & A. Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion. An Inquiry into its Theology and Liturgy*, Leiden, etc., 2002, p. 145, quoting from the work of the Nuṣayrī thinker al-Ṭabarānī, *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*; see following footnote).

42   The identification of the Night of Qadr or the Night of the 15th of Shaʿbān as a symbol of Fāṭima is quite frequent among the esoteric Nuṣayrī Shiʿis; see for example Maymūn b. Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī, *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, ed. R. Strothmann in *Der Islam* 27 (1944-46); Id., "al-Masāʾil al-khāṣṣa" in *Rasāʾil al-ḥikma al-ʿalawiyya*, ed. Abū Mūsā & al-Shaykh Mūsā, s.l. ("Silsilat al-turāth al-ʿalawī"), 2006, pp. 195 sq.; al-Khaṣībī/Khuṣaybī, "al-Risāla al-Rāstbāshiyya", in *Rasāʾil al-ḥikma al-ʿalawiyya*, p. 81. See also the studies by: H. Corbin, "Temple sabéen et Ismaélisme", in Id., *Temple et contemplation. Essais sur l'islam iranien*,

The Shi'i perception, notably in the pre-Buyyid period, of the surah al-Qadr is one of the clearest illustrations of the crux of the doctrinal divergence which distinguishes Shi'is from their adversaries, notably those who will finally be called Sunnis: the fundamental question of the highest religious and spiritual authority. In Sunnism this authority is vested, after the inaugural period of Muḥammad, in the Quran. But Shi'ism considers the Quran to be a "dumb, silent" guide, which only the Friend or Ally of God (*walī*), the Master of the Order (*ṣāḥib/walī l-amr*), the initiating sage (*ʿālim*), represented notably by the figure of the imam, "the speaking book", can legitimately fulfill that sacred role. Through communication with the angels and the Spirit/Holy Spirit, the Wise Guide (*al-imām al-ʿālim*) thus prolongs prophecy by the grace of his theophanic reality, the 'quintuple constitution of his spirit' and his initiatory function. All these aspects are expressed in Shi'ism by that particularly cogent term, "*walāya*", of whom the figure of ʿAlī is the supreme symbol. It is here, I believe, that the central significance of the Shi'i doctrine of the Night of Qadr resides.[43] The final tradition we will examine here sums up almost everything that has just been said:

> Ibn al-Ḥarīsh records the following exhortation of imam Muḥammad al-Jawād Abū Jaʿfar (the Second): "'Oh Shi'i people [*yā maʿshar al-shīʿa*]! Confront your adversaries with surah al-Qadr and you will disarm them. By God, this surah is the most solid Proof vouchsafed by God to men since the time of the Messenger. It is the best part of your doctrine and it expresses the full range of our knowledge [ours, the imams]. Oh Shi'i people! Confront your adversaries with the verses [beginning of Quran 44] and you will disarm them: *Ḥ M/By the Clear Book /We have sent it down in a blessed night,* (*We are ever warning*) [see above footnote 26] for they concern exclusively the Masters of the Order after the Messenger of God. Oh Shi'i people! Has not God declared: *not a nation there is, but there has passed away in it a warner* [Quran 35:24: *wa inna min ummatⁱⁿ illā khalā fīhā nadhīr*]'."
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> Someone then retorted to him: 'But, Abū Jaʿfar, the Prophet Muḥammad was the warner of our community'.

Paris, 1980, pp. 189-190; H. Halm, *Die islamische Gnosis. Die Extreme Schia und die ʿAlawiten*, Zurich-Munich, 1982, index *s.n.* Fāṭima; M. Moosa, *Extremist Shiites. The Ghulat Sects*, New York, 1987, pp. 355 *sqq.*, 391 *sqq.*; Bar-Asher-Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*, index *s.n.* Fāṭima, especially p. 116, pp. 143-145; Beinhauer-Köhler, *Fāṭima bint Muḥammad*, Chap. VI and VII; Y. Friedman, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawīs: an Introduction to the Religion, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria*, Leiden, 2009, p. 155, 160; H. Ansari, "L'héritage ésotérique du chiisme ...", p. 9, footnote 8.

43 See also here chapters 5 and 7.

The imam replied: "You speak true, but during his lifetime did not the Messenger mission other warners to different regions of the earth? So there are warners missioned by Muḥammad just as he himself was a warner missioned by God." "Indeed, you are right". "Then Muḥammad must also have warners after his death and if you deny that, it is as if you condemned the coming generations of this community to go astray".

"But is the Quran not enough for them?"

"Yes, on the condition that someone interprets it [*mufassir*]."

"Did not the Messenger of God interpret it?"

"Yes, but he only initiated one person to that interpretation and he revealed the rank of this person to his community and this person is ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib."

"Oh Abū Jaʿfar, this question is reserved for the elite and the masses cannot bear".

"God wishes to be worshipped in secret until the day when His religion is made manifest in broad daylight …"⁴⁴

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44   Al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl*, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 364-365, no 6. The secret worship of God in the last sentence seems to refer to "the religion of ʿAlī", the esoteric dimension of Islam until the advent of the Saviour of the end times and the public manifestation of this secret religion.

Tactical Dissimulation and Sealing of Prophecy

1   The Keeping of the Secret

Taqiyya, translated here as "tactical dissimulation", is the practice of "hiding a truth of faith from those that are not worthy of it" (*al-taqiyya kitmān ḥaqīqa īmāniyya min ghayr ahlihā*).[1] In this sense it is almost synonymous with two other technical terms: *kitmān* and *khabʾ*. It is a noun of action of the 8th form of the root *WaQaYa/WaQā* that expresses the idea of guarding (or keeping), conservation, protection or fear of something out of a concern for preservation. This reflexive 8th form means protecting oneself against something, of avoiding something one is afraid of. In theological language the word has taken on the meaning of hiding one's faith, even denying it in cases of serious threats to one's physical safety or one's life. Derived from three Quranic verses (3:28; 16:106 et 40:28), *taqiyya*, which, with this specific meaning, was apparently first practised by the Khārijis, is considered permissible in all branches of Islam if it proves to be necessary.[2] On a legal level it is allowable in situations of *ḍarūra*, "vital necessity", and with *rukhṣa*, "temporary permission", as explained, for example, by the ḥanafi scholar Shams al-Dīn al-Sarakhsī (d. 483/1090) in his *Mabsūṭ*.[3] And yet *taqiyya* has historically become one of the principle characteristics, almost a symbol or emblem, of Shiʿi Islam. It is even regarded by the adversaries of Shiʿis as a proof of their lying, hypocrisy and contradictory opinions. Sunni heresiographers and polemicists, from al-Malaṭī in his *Kitāb al-tanbīh wa l-radd ʿalā ahl al-ahwāʾ wa l-bidaʿ* ('The Book of Awakening and the Refutation of the Partisans of Passionate Opinions and Blameworthy Innovations'), by way of the 8th/14th century Neo-ḥanbali rigourist Ibn Taymiyya in his *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya fī naqd kalām al-Shīʿa* ('The Way prescribed by the Prophetic Sunnah for the refutation of Shiʿi Theology'), to contemporary Wahhabi ideologues, all accuse Shiʿism, because of its practice of *taqiyya*,

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1   K.M. al-Shaybī, "al-Taqiyya uṣūluhā wa taṭawwuruhā", *Revue de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université d'Alexandrie* 16 (1962-1963), p. 15 (the entire article, pp. 14-40).

2   M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Dissimulation", *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, J.D. MacAuliffe, (ed.), Leiden, vol.1 (2001), pp. 320-324. On its practice among the Khārijis see Shahrastānī, *Livre des religions et des sectes*, vol. 1, trans. D. Gimaret et G. Monnot, Paris-Louvain, 1986, p. 383 et 414.

3   Al-Sarakhsī, *al-Mabsūṭ*, Beirut, n.d., pp. 38-47.

of being a deceitful sect.[4] Interestingly, certain Orientalists and Islamologists have taken the same attitude. For example, in his 1906 monograph on *taqiyya*, Ignaz Goldziher accuses it of being 'a futile imposture' while at the same time denouncing Shi'is as immoral; and the authors of the article on 'taḵiyya' in the second edition of the *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, Rudolph Strothmann and Moktar Djebli, warn against the 'great moral dangers' of 'tactical dissimulation'.[5]

But more than a century and a half ago, the complexity of the concept had been subtly described by the well-informed traveller Arthur de Gobineau in his famous work *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie centrale*, published in Paris in 1865. Here, Gobineau, while stressing the importance of *taqiyya* and its practice by Shi'is, insisted on its enormous presence in three other religious communities: the Nuṣayris-Alawis of Syria, the Christians in the regions of Trebizond and Erzurum in Anatolia, and the Zoroastrians in Iran. Thus, for him, *taqiyya* was an essential means of survival for minority communities in sometimes hostile environments: physical, but also spiritual, survival, since *taqiyya* allows a given group to safeguard its particular religious beliefs.[6]

Indeed, for the last fifty years, the complexity of this notion has been studied from many angles in many works on Islam, both in different movements within Shi'ism in general and in Twelver Imami Shi'ism in particular.[7] The

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4   Al-Malaṭī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh*, ed. S. Dedering, Istanbul, 1936, pp. 24-25; Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-sunna*, n.p.n.d., vol. 1, pp. 159-160. For the violent attacks by the Ottoman Muʿīn al-Dīn Mīrzā Makhdūm, *al-Nawāqiḍ li-bunyān al-Rawāfiḍ*, see E. Kohlberg, – "Some Imāmī-Shīʿī views on *taqiyya*", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95 (1975), p. 395 (all of it, pp. 395-402; reprinted in Id., *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shīʿism*, Aldershot, 1991, article no. III). As for the Wahhabis, see M. Litvak, "More harmful than the Jews: anti-Shiʿi polemics in modern radical Sunni discourse", in M.A. Amir-Moezzi, M.M. Bar-Asher and S. Hopkins (eds.), *Le Shīʿisme imāmite quarante ans après. Hommage à Etan Kohlberg*, Turnhout, 2009, pp. 302-303 (all of it: pp. 293-314). See also the discussion by al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shīʿa*, French translation by M.J. Mashkour, *Les sectes shiites*, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1980, pp. 79-80 (the two notions of *taqiyya* and of *badāʾ* – divine versatility – are denounced by the adversaries of the Shiʿis as means, by which they justify their contradictions and lies).

5   Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der takiyya im Islam", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 60 (1906), p. 217 and 224 (all of it: pp. 213-226; re-ed. *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. J. De somogyi, Hildesheim, 1967-70, vol. 5, pp. 59-72); *EI2* (French version), vol. 10, pp. 145-146.

6   A. de Gobineau, re-ed. 1928, pp. 1-18 and in particular pp. 12-13 and 16-17; cited by D. De Smet, "La pratique de *taqiyya* et *kitmān* en islam chiite: compromis ou hypocrisie?", in M. Nachi (ed.), *Actualité du compromis. La construction politique de la différence*, Paris, 2011, pp. 148-149 (all of it, pp. 148-161).

7   For example A.A. Fyzee, "The Study of the Literature of the Fatimid *Daʿwa*", in G. Makdisi (ed.), *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honour of H.A.R. Gibb*, Leiden, 1965, pp. 232-249; H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien. Aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, Paris, 1971-1972, index s.v. *taqîyeh* and *ketmân*; E. Kohlberg, article cited (see above footnote 4); Id., "Taqiyya in Shīʿī Theology and Religion", in H.G. Kippenberg and G.G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Secrecy and Concealment. Studies in*

authors of those studies, some, and notably Asaf A. Fyzee, Henry Corbin, Etan Kohlberg, Hans G. Kippenberg, Josef van Ess, Maria Dakake, Daniel De Smet, Orkhan Mir-Kasimov and myself, examining a great number of early as well as recent sources, have been able to show that, far from being mere tactical dissimulation, *taqiyya* has a purely religious and spiritual function and has a significant role in Shiʿi piety. It is in part precisely for the very reason that it is not merely a temporary stratagem to confront a passing danger, that Sunni heresiographers have denounced it so violently. Following Hans Kippenberg, Josef van Ess sees in the sacred nature of *taqiyya* an influence of the Christian *disciplina arcani* derived from Matthew 7:6: "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces"; a passage quoted almost word for word by the Ismaili thinker Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (m. 412/1021) to justify the religious practice of hiding the secret doctrines of the community from the unworthy.[8]

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the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions, Leiden, 1995, pp. 345-380; E. Meyer, "Anlass und Anwendungsbereich der *taqiyya*", *Der Islam* 57(1980), pp. 246-280; M.J. Kister, "On 'Concessions' and Conduct. A Study in Early Islam", in G.H.A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies in the First Century of Islamic Society*, vol. 3, Carbondale, 1983, pp. 89-107; A. Layish, "*Taqiyya* among the Druzes", *Asian and African Studies* 19 (1985), pp. 245-281; Hans G. Kippenberg, "Ketmān. Zur Maxime der Verstellung in der antiken und frühislamischen Religionsgeschichte", in J.W. van Herten et al. (eds.), *Tradition and Re-Interpretation in Jewish and Early Christian Literature. Essays in Honour of Jürgen C.H. Lebram*, Leiden, 1986, pp. 172-183; A. Schimmel, "Secrecy in Sufism", in K.W. Bolle (ed.), *Secrecy in Religions*, Leiden, 1987, pp. 81-102; J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*, vol. I-VI, Berlin-New York, 1991-97, index, s.v.; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, index s.v.; D. Steigerwald, "La dissimulation (*taqiyya*) de la foi dans le Shīʿisme ismaélien", *Studies in Religion* 27/1 (1998), pp. 39-59; S. Makārim, *al-Taqiyya fī l-islām*, Beirut, 2004; L. Clarke, "The Rise and Decline of *Taqiyya* in Twelver Shiʿism", in T. Lawson (ed.), *Reason and Inspiration in Islam*, London-New York, 2005, pp. 46-63; M. Dakake, "Hiding in Plain Sight: the Practical and Doctrinal Significance of Secrecy in Shiʿite Islam", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 24/2 (June 2006), pp. 324-355; M. Ebstein, "Secrecy in Ismāʿīlī Tradition and in the Mystical Thought of Ibn al-ʿArabī", *Journal Asiatique* 298/2 (2010), pp. 303-343; D. De Smet, article cited (see above previous footnote); O. Mir-Kasimov, "Techniques de garde du secret en Islam", *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 228/2 (April-June 2011), pp. 265-287; The fascicle of the Spanish review *Al-Qanṭara* 34/2 (2013) is devoted to *taqiyya*. Many articles in it deal with Shiʿi currents: D. De Smet, "La *taqiyya* et le jeûne de Ramadan: quelques réflexions ismaéliennes sur le sens ésotérique de la charia", pp. 357-386; M. Ebstein, "Absent yet All Times Present: Further Thoughts on Secrecy in the Shīʿī Tradition and in Sunnī Mysticism", pp. 387-413; R. Gleave, "The Legal Efficacy of *taqiyya* Acts in Imāmī Jurisprudence: ʿAlī al-Karakī's *al-Risāla fī l-taqiyya*", pp. 415-438.

8 Kippenberg, *art. cited* (see previous footnote), p. 173; van Ess, *op. cit.* (see previous footnote), vol. 1, p. 313; al-Kirmānī, *al-Risāla al-waḍīʾa fī maʿālim al-dīn*, ms Cambridge Or1455 Arberry 9, fol. 49r, quoted by D. De Smet, *op. cit.* (see above footnote 6), p. 154. On the "discipline of the arcane" among early Christians such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Saint Basil, Saint

It is for these reasons that I have translated the term *taqiyya* as "the keeping of the secret", a literal translation of the Arabic expression *ḥifẓ al-sirr*. Countless traditions attributed to the holy Imams of Shi'ism and recorded by the earliest hadith compilations, lay an insistent emphasis on the esoteric character of some Shi'i teachings and on the canonical duty, for the initiated believer, to keep them hidden.[9] Most of these traditions go back to the 5th and 6th imams, Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. around 115/733) and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765): "Our teaching is difficult, arduous; it is a secret, made secret, protected by a secret";[10] "Nine tenths of religion depend upon the keeping of the secret; he who does not do so has no religion";[11] "the keeping of the secret is part of our religion (ours, the imams) ... he who does not practice it is devoid of faith";[12] "the rule of God is the keeping of the secret";[13] "he who divulges our teachings is like he who renounces them";[14] "Supporting this cause (of ours, the imams) resides not only in knowing and accepting it, but also in protecting it and keeping it secret from those who are not worthy of it."[15]

Broadly speaking, one may say that *taqiyya* has two dimensions: an external 'political' dimension, called by Etan Kohlberg 'prudential *taqiyya*' (necessary for a minority community living in a hostile environment), and an "initiatory"

Cyril of Jerusalem, Pseudo-Denys the Areopagite, etc., see for example *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, ed. A. Vacant and E. Mangenot, tome 1, Paris, 1937, fasc. 2, col. 1738-1758; J. Daniélou and H.I. Marrou, *Nouvelle histoire de l'Église*, Paris, 1963, vol. 1, pp. 99 sqq.

9   On early compilations of Imami traditions, see E. Kohlberg, "Shī'ī Ḥadīth", in A.F.L. Beeston et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature I. Arabic Literature to the End of Umayyad Period*, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 299-307; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 48-58.

10 E.g. al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, ed. Mīrzā Kūčebāghī, Tabriz, n.d. (around 1960), section 1, chapters 1 sqq., pp. 20 sqq. On the centrality of the notion of secrecy in Imami Shi'ism, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *La religion discrète*, pp. 220 sqq. and index s.v. *sirr*, pl. *asrār*.

11 Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, ed. J. Muṣṭafawī, with Persian translation, 4 vols., Tehran, n.d. (the fourth volume translated by H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī dates back to 1386/1966), "Kitāb al-īmān wa l-kufr", bāb al-taqiyya, no. 2, vol. 3, p. 307.

12 *Ibid.*, no. 12, vol. 3, p. 312; also al-Barqī, *Kitāb al-maḥāsin*, ed. J. Muḥaddith Urmawī, Tehran, 1370/1950, pp. 202-203; Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl al-dīn*, ed. 'A.A. Ghaffārī, Qumm, reprint. 1405/1985, bāb 35, no. 5, vol. 2, p. 371 (in certain variants of this hadith, the word "faith" – *īmān* – is replaced by "religion" – *dīn*).

13 Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (attributed), *Tafsīr*, ed. P. Nwyia, *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* (Beirut), 43 (1968) p. 194; ed. 'A. Zay'ūr, *al-Tafsīr al-ṣūfī li-l-Qur'ān 'ind al-Ṣādiq*, Beirut, 1979, p. 136.

14 Al-Kulaynī, *ibid.*, bāb al-idhā'a, no 2, vol. 4, p. 77.

15 Al-Nu'mānī, *Kitāb al-ghayba*, ed. 'A.A. Ghaffārī, Tehran, 1397/1977, bāb 1, no. 3, p. 55. On other early sources regarding *taqiyya*, see Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 311-312, footnote 685.

inner dimension, which the same scholar calls "non-prudential *taqiyya*" (arising from the duty to protect some doctrines from non-initiates by keeping them secret).[16] Daniel De Smet has convincingly shown that the two dimensions are not always dissociable and are often closely interrelated.[17] Matthew 7.6 seems also to say this.

2   Prophetic Abilities of the Imam

But what should be kept secret? Which teachings should be protected, to protect in turn the initiated faithful from the ignorance of the non-initiated, so often accompanied by violence? Shi'i writings, whether Hadith, theological and exegetical writings or legal treatises, almost all contain a specific chapter, of varying length, on the duty of keeping the secret, on the words which describe it (*taqiyya, kitmān, khab'*, as we have seen), on the doctrinal need for it, on its sacred character, and on how it should be implemented. There are even Shi'i monographs devoted to *taqiyya*. But it is not necessarily these chapters or these treatises which say exactly which doctrines should be kept secret. This information is scattered here and there, often fragmentarily, in a technique which is itself part of *taqiyya* and which has been called 'dispersion of information' (*tabdīd al-ʿilm*).[18] One recognizes these doctrines by their esoteric and initiatory character, by the allusive expressions which sometimes accompany them, inviting the faithful to be discrete about them, by their difference from, and even their denial of, Sunni material said to be "orthodox". This confirms, yet again if need be, the theories of specialists on the 'cult of secrecy' in religious traditions, Georg Simmel, Paul Christopher Johnson, Antoine Faivre and others, who suggest that "the secret" is often a stylistic device, a rhetorical figure, whose aim is to tickle the curiosity of listener or reader and to attract his attention to the nature and importance of a given doctrine; but 'the secret' itself is never totally hidden. So we know that, in Shi'ism, the 'secret teachings' include messianic material, the history of the composition of the Quran, the thesis of the falsification of the official Quran, the Shi'i view of the early history of Islam and its view of the Companions of the Prophet, the hidden meanings of the Quran, certain spiritual exercises and, above all, imamological doctrines about the nature, the status and the functions of those cardinal

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16   E. Kohlberg, "*Taqiyya* in Shi'i Theology and Religion", pp. 346 sqq. and 368 sqq.

17   D. De Smet, "La pratique de *taqiyya* …", pp. 152-3; Id., "La *taqiyya* et le jeûne de Ramadan …", p. 357.

18   On *tabdīd al-ʿilm*, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, index s.v.

saints of Shi'ism, the Imams.[19] Of the imamological doctrines to which *taqiyya* is to be applied, there is one which, to my knowledge, has not been given due attention and yet is of huge religious and political importance. It is the specifically prophetic powers of the Imams.

The earliest documents describing these powers are to be found in the early Imami Hadith corpus. The earliest records were compiled between roughly 850 and 950 CE. They are by traditionists like al-Sayyārī, Abū Ja'far al-Barqī, al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, al-Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya al-Ṣadūq, and include the first Quranic commentaries attributed to the eleventh imam al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī, and those compiled by 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, al-'Ayyāshī or Furāt al-Kūfī.[20] The traditions which will be considered here are known from these and other similar works, in particular from the *Kitāb al-Kāfī* ("The Sufficient Book") of al-Kulaynī (d. around 329/940-41), no doubt the most systematic compilation dating from the period.[21]

The hadiths about the prophetic qualities of the imams seem to form several groups, corresponding no doubt to several 'layers', several doctrinal phases. In the first group, no prophetic power of any sort is attributed to the Imams. In these traditions, they themselves tirelessly repeat that their status is similar to the imams of the previous prophets and that their powers are limited to the realm of the licit and illicit, that is, to the (all too) 'orthodox' legal science. The purpose of this group of traditions appears to be to confirm the dogma that Muḥammad is the last prophet and Islam the last religion. Al-Kulaynī has grouped those traditions into a chapter significantly entitled 'the repugnant character of the belief in the prophecy of the Imams' (*karāhiyat al-qawl fīhim* [i.e. *fī l-a'imma*] *bi-l-nubuwwa*), which clearly indicates, as we know from other sources, that some Shi'i circles professed that belief.[22] However, the closer one

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19   These themes are those studied in my already mentioned works. On the question of the falsification of the "Official Quran" in Shi'ism, see now E. Kohlberg and M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification*, Leiden-Boston, 2009.

20   Regarding these works, see the book mentioned in the previous footnote as well as the studies mentioned above in footnote 9.

21   Regarding this major traditionist and his main work, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi and H. Ansari, "Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī (m. 328/939-40 ou 329/940-941) et son *Kitāb al-Kāfī*. Une introduction", *Studia Iranica* 38/2 (2009), pp. 191-247; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 5 (extended version of the previous article); Id., *La Preuve de Dieu*, Paris, 2018, pp. 133 sqq. The traditions concerning the prophetic abilities of the Imams have been included in countless other compilations of traditions. In order not to burden the footnotes, I shall limit myself mainly to the *Kāfī* (most of these traditions are now translated into French in M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *La Preuve de Dieu*, second part, chap. 3).

22   Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, "K. al-ḥujja", hadiths n° 696 sqq. (in continuous numbering), vol. 2, pp. 32 sqq.

looks, the more one has the impression that the traditionist has exercised a form of *taqiyya*. This chapter contains only seven very short hadiths where a certain evolution is clearly perceptible: whereas the first hadiths seem to stress that Muḥammad is the last of the prophets, that the Quran is the last of the revealed Books and that the Imams are the guarantors only of the good legal functioning of Islam, the later hadiths attribute to the Imams an increasingly weighty role in 'the economy of the sacred'.[23] In the penultimate hadith of the chapter, Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, while dissociating himself from those who believe in the divine or prophetic nature of the Imams, describes the Imams as being 'the treasurers of God's knowledge' (*khuzzān ʿilm allāh*), 'the interpreters of the cause of God' (*tarājimat amr allāh*) or also 'the shining proof of God (*al-ḥujjat al-bāligha*)'. In the last hadith of all, the same Jaʿfar is said to have declared that the only difference between the Imams and the Prophet Muḥammad is the number of wives they can legally marry! The following chapters in al-Kulaynī, which include a far greater number of traditions, appear to greatly nuance, if not even contradict, the first group of 'orthodox' hadiths just mentioned. Indeed, beginning with the next chapter, the Imams are described by the two particularly striking technical terms *muḥaddath* and *mufahham*, which mean respectively 'the one to whom celestial entities speak' and 'the one to whom understanding of celestial things is given'.[24] The subsequent chapters record anthropogonical material according to which the Imam is created from the same celestial substance as the Prophet Muḥammad: the clay drawn from the Divine Throne; as we have seen in the previous chapters of the present book, he possesses five spirits of which the most noble is the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Sanctity (*rūḥ al-quds*), the title which, as we know, describes the entity or faculty that enables the reception of revelation.[25] The Imam is invested with a heavenly entity called the Spirit (*al-rūḥ*) which the Quran mentions (e.g. Q. 16:2, 17:85 or 42:52): "the Spirit proceeding from the Order of the Lord"; thanks to this celestial being, superior to the archangels Michael and Gabriel, the Imam is able to directly receive divine revelations.[26]

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23   Respectively traditions n° 1 to 5 and then 6 to 7 of the afore-mentioned chapter.

24   Al-Kulaynī, *ibid.*, n° 703 sqq. (in continuous numbering); regarding these terms, and the first one in particular, see E. Kohlberg, "The Term 'Muḥaddath' in Twelver Shīʿism", in *Studia Orientalia memoriae D.H. Baneth dedicata*, Jerusalem, 1979, pp. 39-47 (= *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shīʿism*, article n° V); M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, index *s.v.* and in particular pp. 176 sqq.

25   Al-Kulaynī, *ibid.*, no-s 707 sqq.; also al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, section 9, chapters 14 and 15.

26   Al-Kulaynī, *ibid.*, n° 711 sqq.; also al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, section 9, chap. 16.

It is interesting to note that in some traditions, the Imam's interlocutor, often a close disciple, standing before his Master who is listing his own prophetic powers, seems terrified by the enormity of his declarations. The imam then assures him of his sincerity and asks him at the same time to remain discrete.[27] Clearly, what seems to be endangered here is the Islamic dogma of the absolute end, the permanent cessation of prophecy after Muḥammad. I shall return to it.

In other traditions some nuances are introduced, no doubt to preserve the "orthodox" dogma of the superiority of the Prophet Muḥammad over all humans in general and over the Imams in particular. Distinctions are thus established between a messenger prophet (*rasūl*), a simple prophet (*nabī*) and a *muḥaddath* imam ("to whom angels speak"): the messenger prophet sees and hears the angel both in dream and awake, the simple prophet sees and hears the angel only in dream, finally the *muḥaddath* imam hears but does not see the angel.[28] But even these nuances appear to be circumstantial and to have been added *a posteriori*, as they are contradicted by other traditions that are just as allusive as they are suggestive. According to one of them, Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq shows a close disciple "angel fluff" (*zaghab al-malāʾika*) which has fallen into his house and which he preserves preciously.[29] According to another hadith, in response to a precise question from a follower: "Do the angels reveal themselves to you?", the same imam avoids answering and, caressing the head of one of his sons, says: "the angels are kinder to our children than we are ourselves." In the same hadith, the imam seems to say, in an indirectly allusive way, that the angels come down to his house to hold his hand (*muṣāfaḥa*).[30] All this seems to indicate that, just like the greatest prophets, the Imam can not only hear but also to see the angel, while being wide awake. Al-Kulaynī, again, has grouped these traditions into a chapter titled "the angels get into where the imams live,

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27   Al-Kulaynī, *Ibid.*, n° 704 and 707.

28   Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, section 8, chap. 1, pp. 368-374; al-Kulaynī, *ibid.*, kitāb al-ḥujja, bāb al-farq bayn al-rasūl wa l-nabī wa l-muḥaddath, nos 434 *sqq.*, vol. 1, pp. 248-250; also E. Kohlberg, "The Term 'Muḥaddath'", *passim*; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, p. 178. The presentation of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb as a *muḥaddath* by Sunni authorities (see Y. Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood in Sunnī Islām", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986), p. 203 (all of it, pp. 177-215)) seems to fall, at least in part, under the influence of anti-Shiʿi controversy and the will to neutralize the prophetic abilities of ʿAlī by those of the second caliph (see A. Hakim, "ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb, calife par la grâce de Dieu", *Arabica* 54/3 (2008), pp. 317-336).

29   Al-Kulaynī, *ibid.*, nos 1021 and 1022, vol. 2, p. 241.

30   *Ibid.*, n° 1020, vol. 2, pp. 240-241. The term *muṣāfaḥa* ("to shake hands") can also mean "to face, to present oneself in front of someone". In both cases, the visible presence of the angel seems self-evident.

tread upon their carpets and bring them information" (*inna l-a'imma tadkhulu l-malā'ika buyūtahum wa taṭa'u busuṭahum wa ta'tīhim bi-l-akhbār*).[31]

Furthermore, just like Muḥammad, the prophets and the ancient sages, the Imam is capable of heavenly ascension; he rises to the Divine Throne to increase his knowledge or to meet the spirits of holy figures from the past.[32] He possesses the Holy Scriptures of the previous religions which he can read in their original languages; he knows the events of the heavens and the earth, those of the past and the future and he has miraculous supernatural and thaumaturgic powers.[33]

A contemporary of al-Kulaynī, al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (d. 290/902-903) devotes chapters 14 to 19 of the ninth section of his *Kitāb Baṣā'ir al-darajāt* to the five spirits of the Imams and to the support that the Holy Spirit and the Spirit-proceeding-from-the-Order-of-the-Lord offer them, exactly as they do to the prophets (see above ch. 5 and 6).[34] Of the dozen traditions of which we examined a number in a previous chapter, I will confine myself to a single one about ʿAlī which is quite representative. A disciple tells Imam Jaʿfar that ʿAlī, the first Imam, claimed that in Yemen, where he had been sent by the Prophet, he acted only according to the commands of God and Muḥammad; now, how, the disciple asked, could he claim such a thing when the Quran had not yet been totally revealed and the Prophet was absent? Jaʿfar replies: "He was informed by the Holy Spirit".[35] In other words, thanks to 'his' Holy Spirit, his personal envoy from the celestial Holy Spirit, sometimes equated with the angel Gabriel, the angel of revelation, the Imam, in this case ʿAlī, is able to receive revelation directly, without being dependent on the person of Muḥammad or on the Quran.

3   The Seal of Prophets

All these powers are part of what is described by the expression "knowledge of the invisible world" (*ʿilm al-ghayb*) which later Islamic orthodoxy will restrict exclusively to the Prophet, or even to God alone. But numerous records seem

31   *Ibid.*, n° 1020 sqq., vol. 2, pp. 240 sqq.

32   See M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "L'imam dans le ciel. Ascension et initiation (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine III)" (= *La religion discrète*, chap. 5).

33   See M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, part III-2, pp. 174-199.

34   Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, section 9, chapters 14-19, pp. 445-466. On the author and his work, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummî (m. 290/902-3) et son Kitâb baṣâ'ir al-darajât", *Journal Asiatique* 280/3-4 (1992), pp. 221-250; extended version of that article in Id., *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 4; A.J. Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shīʿism: Hadith as Discourse Between Qum and Baghdad*, Richmond, 2000, chapters 5 and 7.

35   *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, section 9, chap. 15, no 8, pp. 452-453.

to suggest that deeply initiated disciples of the Imams are also capable of pro-
phetic feats. First it is claimed that they were created from the same substance
as the prophets and Imams, the substance of the heavenly world of ʿIliyyūn.[36]
Then, the initiated follower, identified by the technical expression 'the tested
faithful' (*muʾmin mumtaḥan*), is constantly put on equal footing with the angel
of proximity (*malak muqarrab*) and the messenger prophet (*nabī mursal*).[37]
It appears from a number of heresiographical and historical works, that the
great heresiarchs of the first centuries of Islam, men like Abū Manṣūr al-ʿIjlī,
Bayān b. Samʿān, Abū l-Khaṭṭāb or even the mystic and martyr al-Ḥallāj,[38]
almost all of them belonging to Shiʿi secret circles, claimed to be the locus of
manifestation of God and/or to be the Messenger of God and to be endowed
with miraculous prophetic and messianic powers, those of the Imams and also
the earlier prophets, Jesus Christ in particular. Hence the very widespread use
in Shiʿi circles of two prophetic traditions: "the Sages are the inheritors of the
prophets" (*al-ʿulamāʾ warathat al-anbiyāʾ*) and "the Sages of my community are
like to the prophets of Israel" (*ʿulamāʾ ummatī ka-anbiyāʾ banī isrāʾīl*).[39]

In this respect, the tradition called the "hadith of the rank" (*ḥadīth al-manzila*)
seems symptomatic. Muḥammad is said to have told ʿAlī. "As Aaron stood in rank
to Moses, so you stand to me, except that after me there is no prophet" (*anta
minnī bi-manzilat Hārūn min Mūsā illā annahu lā nabiyya baʿdī*). This version of
the tradition, known as the 'long version', is recorded in many sources, Sunni

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36   Amir-Moezzi, *Guide divin*, pp. 96-97.

37   M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Seul l'homme de Dieu est humain. Théologie et anthropologie mys-
      tique à travers l'exégèse imamite ancienne (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine IV)"
      (= *La religion discrète*, chap. 8).

38   On these personalities and generally on those whom the heresiographers called "extrem-
      ists" (*ghulāt*), see for example H. Halm, *Die islamische Gnosis. Die Extreme Schia und die
      ʿAlawiten*, Zurich-Munich, 1982; W. Tucker, *Mahdīs and Millenarians: Shiite Extremists
      in Early Muslim Iraq*, New York, 2008; P. Crone, *The Nativist Prophets in Early Islamic
      Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism*, Cambridge, 2011; J. van Ess, *Der Eine und
      das Andere. Beobachtungen an islamischen häresiographischen Texten*, Berlin-New York,
      2011; S.W. Anthony, *The Caliph and the Heretic. Ibn Sabaʾ and the Origins of Shīʿism*,
      Leiden, 2012; M. Asatryan, *Controversies in Formative Shiʿi Islam*, London-New York, 2017;
      B. Tendler Krieger, "'Abd Allāh b. Sabaʾ and the Role of the Nuṣayrī Bāb. Rehabiliting the
      Heresiarchs of the Islamic Tradition", in M.A. Amir-Moezzi et al. (eds.), *L'ésotérisme Shiʿite*,
      pp. 441-472. On the artificial and probably late character of the heresiographical distinc-
      tion between the "moderate Shiʿism" of the Imams and the "extremist Shiʿism" of the
      ghulāt, especially during the early period, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 313
      sqq. and Id., "Les Imams et les Ghulāt", *ShiʾI Studies Review* 4/1-2 (2020), pp. 5-38.

39   On the particularly important role of the disciples of the Imams, see E. Kohlberg, "Imam
      and Community in the Pre-Ghayba Period", in S. Amir Arjomand (ed.), *Authority and
      Political Culture in Shiʿism*, Albany, 1988, pp. 25-53 (= *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shīʿism*,
      article no. XIII); and now L.N. Takim, *The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious
      Authority in Shiʿite Islam*, New York, 2006, *passim*.

as well as Shiʿi, and with good reason: it stresses the very high religious 'rank' of ʿAlī, comparable to that of the biblical Aaron, whilst still respecting the 'orthodox' dogma that Muḥammad is the last prophet. But there is also a 'short version' of Muḥammad's remark in which "except that after me there is no prophet" is missing. Paradoxically, the 'short' version has also been recorded in the most orthodox Sunni sources.[40] Y. Friedmann, the author of two now classic works on the question of the end or the continuance of prophecy in Islam, believes that the older, short, version dates from a period when the dogma was not yet firmly established. But U. Rubin defends the orthodox position, arguing that the short version was recorded by Sunni authorities because the end of prophecy was already so firmly established in orthodox dogma that it is 'taken as read'.[41] The great Imami scholar Ibn Bābūya al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991) analyses this hadith at length in his work *Maʿānī l-akhbār* ('Meaning of the Traditions'). He considers only the long version, but he focuses mostly on its last phrase, insisting on the fact that, without it, some Shiʿi circles could have believed in the prophetic powers of ʿAlī after Muḥammad. This shows that al-Ṣadūq was aware of the existence of the short version and that, at least until the 4th/10th century, the dogma of the end of prophecy was not yet universally accepted, notably in Shiʿi circles.[42] This type of ambiguity is also palpable in, for example, sermon 234 of the *Nahj al-balāgha*, compiled by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (406/1015-16) between the 4th and 5th/10th-11th centuries, in which ʿAlī declares: "I also see the light of Revelation and of the mission of the messenger and I smell the

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40   For example al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Krehl, Leiden, 1864, "Faḍāʾil aṣḥāb al-nabī" 9, vol. 2, p. 436; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Cairo, 1955, "Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥāba" 32, vol. 4, p. 1871; Ibn Mājā, *Sunan*, Cairo, 1952, "Muqaddima" 115, vol. 1, pp. 42-43.

41   Y. Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood in Sunnī Islām", pp. 186-187; Id., *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Aḥmadī Religious Thought and its Medieval Background*, Berkeley, 1989, pp. 59-60; U. Rubin, "The Seal of the Prophets and the Finality of Prophecy. On the Interpretation of the Qurʾānic Sūrat al-Aḥzāb (33)", ZDMG 164/1 (2014), part 5.1 "ʿAlī and Aaron" (all of the article pp. 65-96).

42   Ibn Bābūya, *Maʿānī l-akhbār*, ed. ʿA.A. Ghaffārī, Tehran, 1379/1959-1960, pp. 74-79; tradition analysed by M.M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shiism*, Leiden-Boston-Cologne, 1999, pp. 156-157. Indeed, we have already seen, in the traditions recorded by al-Kulaynī, that certain Shiʿi faithful believed in the prophetic status of the Imams; on this, see also al-Kulaynī, *al-Rawḍa min al-Kāfī*, ed. H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī, Tehran, 1389/1969-1970, vol. 1, pp. 173 and 176 (the Umayyad caliph Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik recognizes that certain Shiʿis of Kūfa considered Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir to be a prophet); also al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, section 9, chap. 15, no. 5 (a disciple asked Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq if he is a prophet); al-Nuʿmānī (d. vers 345/956), *Kitāb al-ghayba*, ed. ʿA.A. Ghaffārī, Tehran, 1397/1977, p. 145 (according to the author, the Imams have exactly the same religious stature as the Prophet); Ibn Bābūya al-Ṣadūq, *Amālī*, ed. and Persian translation by M.B. Kamareʾī, Tehran, 1404/1984, "Majlis" 47, no. 4, p. 278 (a Khāriji, converted to Shiʿism, says he recognized the prophetic mission – *risāla* – of Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq).

perfume of prophecy", and Muḥammad replies: "ʿAlī! You hear what I hear and you see what I see except that you are not a prophet."[43]

The existence of some groups of contradictory traditions may be due to their dating from different periods, or in others to their being addressed to disciples with different levels of initiatory knowledge, but their appearance together in, for example, an important author like al-Kulaynī, their frequently allusive tone, and the advice of the Imams to treat their content with great discretion, are certainly linked to the duty of 'keeping the secret'. And with good reason, for some of these documents do question the fundamental article of faith by which Muḥammad is the last prophet and Islam the last revealed religion before the End of Times.

What is the history of this article of faith? Are Shiʿi imamological doctrines of the first Hijri centuries the only ones to question it? The dogma crystallized around the interpretation of the expression 'seal of prophets' from the Quranic verse 33:40: "Muḥammad is the father of no man among you but he is the Messenger of God and the Seal of Prophets" [*mā kāna muḥammadun abā aḥadin min rijālikum wa lākin rasūla llāhi wa khātama* [or *khātima*] *an-nabiyyina* ...].[44] The expression *khātam/khātim al-nabiyyin* is a hapax legomenon in the ʿUthmānian Quran and, like other uniquely appearing expressions, it has given a great deal of trouble, first to Muslim scholars and after them to Orientalists and Islamologists. It is said to be of Manichean origin. The early Muslim historians of religion, such as al-Bīrūnī, al-Shahrastānī, Ibn al-Murtaḍā or Abū l-Maʿālī al-Balkhī declare almost unanimously that it was Mani who was called 'Seal of the Prophets'.[45] Without getting into erudite discussions,

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43   ... *Arā nūr al-waḥy wa al-risāla wa ashummu rīḥ al-nubuwwa ... innaka tasmaʿ mā asmaʿ wa tarā mā arā illā annaka lasta bi-nabiyy* ... (attributed to) ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, ed. ʿA.N. Fayḍ al-islām, Tehran, 1351 solar/1972, p. 812.

44   At verse 6 of surah 61, in the version of the Companion Ubayy b. Kaʿb – not in the official Vulgate – one could read: "And [remember:] when Jesus, son of Mary, said: 'O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of God unto you and I announce to you a prophet whose community shall be the last community and through whom God shall put the seal on the prophets and apostles'. [The Sons of Israel] said: 'This is pure magic'"; see for example A. Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qurʾān*, Leiden, 1937, p. 170 (English text); R. Blachère, translation of the Quran, Paris, 1966, p. 593 and footnotes. The official version is as follows: "And [remember:] when Jesus, son of Mary said: 'O Children of Israel! I am truly God's messenger to you, confirming the Torah which came before me and giving good news of a messenger after me whose name will be Aḥmad'. Yet, when [Jesus] came with clear proofs, [the Children of Israel] said: 'This is pure magic'."

45   Al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār al-bāqiya*, ed. C.E. Sachau, *Alberuni, Chronologie orientalischer Völker*, Leipzig, 1923, p. 207; al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-milal wa l-niḥal*, ed. W. Cureton, *Book of Religious and Philosophical Sects*, London, 1846, p. 192; Ibn al-Murtaḍā and al-Balkhī cited by K. Kessler, *Mani: Forschungen über die manichäische Religion*, vol. 1, Berlin, 1889, pp. 349

it seems that most modern researchers tend to agree. H.-Ch. Puech, J. Ries, M. Tardieu, G. Stroumsa and C. Colpe, in his great *Das Siegel der Propheten*, all link the expression to Manicheism and the figure of Mani.[46] They are also unanimous in believing that, in Manichean texts, 'the Seal of Prophets' does not necessarily mean the last of the prophets. It is true that Mani saw himself as the equivalent of the Paraclete promised by Jesus but he also practised the *Imitatio Christi*, and the expression 'Seal of the Prophets', while it is variously interpreted, seems to have meant to Mani 'the One who comes to confirm' the mission of Christ but also of Zoroaster and of Buddha, just as a seal confirms the content of an official letter. Guy Stroumsa has analyzed an extract from the Manichean text *Xuāstvānīft* in its Uyghur translation in which the Manichean initiates, the Elect, are called 'prophets'. Mani, himself using the title 'apostle', considered to be superior to the 'prophets', confirms the mission of the Elect. Here, the prophets are not predecessors but the successors, the disciples of Mani.[47] This is very close to the Shi'i concept of the initiated successors of Muḥammad, the Imams and other sages whom the Prophet is said to have confirmed. As to their origins, these metaphors belong, as Michel Tardieu has stressed, to Judeo-Christianity *strictu sensu*.[48] The significance and variety of the symbolism of the 'seal' to the Gnostics is well known: see the dozens of occurrences of the term in the index of *Ecrits gnostiques. La bibliothèque*

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et 371; G. Stroumsa, "'Le sceau des prophètes': nature d'une métaphore manichéenne", in Id., *Savoir et salut*, Paris, 1992, chap. xv, pp. 276-277 (French translation of "Seal of the Prophets: The Nature of a Manichean Metaphor", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986), pp. 61-74).

46   H.-Ch. Puech, *Le manichéisme*, Paris, 1949, p. 146; M. Tardieu, *Le manichéisme*, Paris, 1981, pp. 19-27; G. Stroumsa (1986; see previous footnote); C. Colpe, *Das Siegel der Propheten: historische Beziehungen zwischen Judentum, Judenchristentum, Heidentum und frühem Islam*, Berlin, 1990, chap. 9; M. Gil, "The Creed of Abū 'Āmir", *Israel Oriental Studies* 12 (1992), 38 sq. (all of it, pp. 9-47); R. Simon, "Mānī and Muḥammad", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 21 (1997), p. 135 (all of it: pp. 118-141); M. Sfar, *Le Coran, la Bible et l'Orient ancien*, Paris, 1998, chap. 11 ("Aḥmad, le prophète manichéen"); S. Evstatiev, "On the Perception of the *Khātam al-nabiyyin* Doctrine in Arabic Historical Thought: Confirmation or Finality?", in S. Leder, H. Kilpatrick, B. Martel-Thoumian & H. Schönig (eds.), *Studies in Arabic and Islam. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* (Proceedings of the 19th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants), Louvain, 2002, pp. 455-467; J. Ries, "Les Kephalaia. La catéchèse de l'Eglise de Mani", in D. De Smet, G. de Callataÿ and J. van Reeth (eds.), *Al-Kitāb. La sacralité du texte dans le monde de l'Islam*, Bruxelles etc., 2004, pp. 143-158; J. van Reeth, "La typologie du prophète selon le Coran: le cas de Jésus", in G. Dye and F. Nobilio (eds.), *Figures bibliques en islam*, Bruxelles, 2011, pp. 104-105 (all of it, pp. 81-105).

47   G. Stroumsa, "Le Sceau des Prophètes", p. 283.

48   M. Tardieu, *Le manichéisme*, p. 21.

de Nag Hammadi.[49] Hartmut Bobzin has recently proposed the idea that, in a number of Judeo-Christian and Christian texts, the expression means the figure of Jesus, coming to confirm and fulfill the prophecy of Moses.[50] This is also often the case of Muḥammad who, as the Quranic messenger, comes to confirm and fulfill the prophetic missions of Jesus and Moses.

Returning to Islam, this time to Sunni Islam, the doctrine that Muḥammad is the last of the prophets is so firmly based that one might tend to forget that it has a history. However, the complexity of the material in Islamic sources (beginning with the precise meaning of the term *khātam*/*khātim* in the Quran) as well as of the critical studies on the issue (see H. Hirschfeld, I. Goldziher, J. Horowitz, A. Jeffery, J. Wansbrough, the two studies of Y. Friedmann mentioned above, D. Powers or U. Rubin) highlight that the problematic history and nature of the doctrine is still under discussion.[51]

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49   J.-P. Mahé and P.-H. Poirier (dir.), *Écrits gnostiques. La bibliothèque de Nag Hammadi*, Paris, 2007, index p. 1812 (it however needs to be noted that in *Allogène* (NH XI,3), "seal" signifies the closing of revelation; *ibid.*, p. 1574).

50   H. Bobzin, "'Das Siegel der Propheten'. Maimonides und das Verständnis von Mohammeds Prophetentum", in G. Tamer (ed.), *The Trias of Maimonides. Jewish, Arabic and Ancient Culture of Knowledge*, Berlin, 2005, pp. 289-306; Id., "The 'Seal of the Prophets': Towards an Understanding of Muḥammad's Prophethood", in A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai, M. Marx (eds.), *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu*, Leiden, 2010, pp. 565-583. One could also add to the above-mentioned sources: Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos*, XI,10: "Jesus is the seal of all the prophets [*Christus est signaculum omnium prophetarum*] who have preceded him and wo came to announce him." However, for Tertullian, it is not Jesus but John the Baptist who is the last of the prophets (*clausula prophetarum*), the last one to have announced the advent of Christ. On his side, S. Khalil Samir interprets the Quranic expression as being "a mark of belonging" (and not a final mark), a sign of the authenticity of the prophetic mission of Muḥammad, by linking it to the Gospel of John 6,27: "For on him [Christ] the Father, God, has set his seal"; Khalil Samir, "Une réflexion chrétienne sur la mission prophétique de Muḥammad", in A.-M. Delcambre and J. Bosshard (eds.), *Enquêtes sur l'islam, en hommage à Antoine Moussali*, Paris, 2004, pp. 267 sq. (all of it, pp. 263-292); see already H. Windisch, "Die fünf johanneischen Parakletprüche", in *Festgabe für A. Jülicher*, Tübingen, 1927, p. 120 (all of it: pp. 110-137).

51   H. Hirschfeld, *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Korān*, Leipzig, 1886, pp. 71 sq.; Id., *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran*, London, 1902, p. 139; I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, I-II, Halle, 1888-1890, pp. 104 sqq. (partial French translation of tome II by L. Bercher, *Études sur la tradition islamique*, Paris, 1952, pp. 126 sqq.); J. Horowitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, Berlin, 1926, pp. 53 sq.; H. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, Berlin, 1931, pp. 422 sqq.; A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾān*, Baroda, 1938, pp. 120-121; Id., *The Qurʾān as Scripture*, New York, 1952, pp. 78-79; J. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies. Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, Oxford, 1977, p. 64; Y. Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood in Sunnī Islām", *passim*; Id., *Prophecy Continuous*; A.A. Ambros, *A Concise Dictionary of Koranic Arabic*, Wiesbaden, 2004, pp. 83

Consulting the literature of Quranic interpretation, even in the early period, it is clear that almost the only interpretation of *khātam* or *khātim al-nabiyyin* is that there will be no other prophet after Muḥammad. But if one examines other sources, in particular Hadith, even the most 'orthodox', other definitions appear. For example, al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the undisputed authorities of Sunni hadith, record a tradition where it means 'the prophet who comes to fulfill the mission of the previous prophets'.[52]

In many hadith recorded by Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Saʿd, al-Ṭabarī or Ibn Kathīr, the expression means the prophet who appears just before the End of Times and not specifically the last of the prophets.[53]

In a tradition reported by ʿĀʾisha, the wife of the Prophet, and recorded by Ibn Abī Shayba and many others, she declares: "Say (about Muḥammad) that he is the Seal of Prophets, but do not say that there will be no prophet after him".[54] Other Companions thought the same thing. In Ibn Abī Shayba's work the relevant chapter is entitled: "All those who refused to profess that there will no prophet after the Prophet" (*man kariha an yaqūl lā nabī baʿd al-nabī*).[55]

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sq.; J. van Ess, "Das Siegel der Propheten: die Endzeit und das prophetische im Islam", in M. Riedl & T. Schabert (ed.), *Propheten und Prophezeiungen*, Berlin, 2005, pp. 53-75; D. Powers, *Muḥammad is Not the Father of Any of Your Men: the Making of the Last Prophet*, Philadelphia, 2009; U. Rubin, "The Seal of the Prophets and the Finality of Prophecy". The list is far from exhaustive.

52 This is the famous "tradition of the brick" (*ḥadīth al-labina*), i.e. the brick that is missing from the grandiose monument of religion; see al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Krehl, Leiden, 1864, "K. al-manāqib", 18, vol. 2, p. 390; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Cairo, 1955, "K. al-faḍāʾil", 22-23, vol. 4, p. 1791.

53 Y. Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood", pp. 182-183; the theme of "Muḥammad, the prophet of the end times" (*nabī/rasūl al-malḥama/al-malāḥim*), constitutes the central subject of the major and yet unjustly forgotten work of Paul Casanova, *Mohammed et la fin du monde*.

54 Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf fī l-aḥādīth wa l-āthār*, ed. M.ʿA. Shāhīn, Beirut, 1416/1995, vol. 5, p. 337, no. 26644; also Ibn Qutayba, *Taʾwīl mukhtalaf al-ḥadīth*, Cairo, 1326/1908, pp. 235-236 (French translation by G. Lecomte, *Le traité des divergences du Ḥadīth d'Ibn Qutayba*, Damascus, 1967, pp. 207-209 (with the commentary of Ibn Qutayba)); al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr fī l-tafsīr bi-l-maʾthūr*, reprint. Beirut, n.d. (Dār al-thaqāfa), vol. 5, p. 204; Y. Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood", p. 192; Id., *Prophecy Continuous*, p. 63; C. Gilliot, "Miscellanea coranica I", *Arabica* 59 (2012), pp. 118-119 (all of it, pp. 109-133).

55 Ibn Abī Shayba, *ibid.*, 19, adab, vol. 5, pp. 219 sqq. Apparently, in order to solve the contradiction of those traditions with the "Muḥammad, the last of the prophets" dogma, other traditions would have been put into circulation according to which ʿĀʾisha and other Companions forbade it to be said, according to our formula, that Muḥammad is the last prophet on earth because Jesus was going to return to the world at the end of days; see *ibid.*, no. 26645; see Y. Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood", pp. 192-193; Id., *Prophecy Continuous*, pp. 63-64; U. Rubin seems to accept the traditional point of view of Islamic sources and refutes the analyses of Friedmann; see his article "The Seal of the

Furthermore, in a great number of traditional records concerning Ibrāhīm, the son of the Prophet and of Mary the Copt, and who died young, it is said that Muḥammad, weeping for the death of his child, said: "By God, he was a prophet, son of a prophet" and also "… Had he lived, he would have been a truthful man and a prophet (*ṣiddīqan nabiyyan*)".[56]

Among documents about the 'Life of the Prophet' recorded by the famous Ibn Hishām in his no less famous *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, there is an episode where the Christian monk Baḥīra/ Baḥīrā recognises the prophetic nature of Muḥammad by the 'seal of prophecy', i.e. a bodily mark, probably a freckle, on Muḥammad's body, proving his prophetic powers. This anecdote was passed down to many other "biographers" of the Prophet.[57]

So the assertion that prophecy ended at the death of Muḥammad was not generally accepted for at least the first two or three centuries of Islam. Ancient Arabic poetry from the very first centuries seems to reveal the existence of hesitations about it. The *Dīwān* by, or attributed to, the poet Umayya Ibn Abī al-Ṣalt, the Prophet's contemporary, contains a verse which says that Muḥammad is the seal of the prophets, those who came before him and those who will come after him.[58] Y. Friedmann also refers to other ancient poetry

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Prophets", part 7 ("The Muslim Jesus"). In any case, it seems certain that during the first times of Islam, the doctrine according to which Muḥammad is the last prophet was some problematic; see also W. Madelung, *The succession to Muḥammad. A study of the early Caliphate*, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 16-17.

56   Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, al-Sīra al-nabawiyya, 2 vols., ed. N. Ghazzāwī, Damascus, 1984-1991, vol. 1, p. 120; Ibn Māja, *al-Sunan*, ed. M.F. ʿAbd al-Bāqī, 2 vols., Cairo, 1952-1954, bāb al-janāʾiz 27, vol. 1, p. 484, no 1511; al-Bayhaqī, *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa*, ed. ʿA.M. Qalʿajī, 7 vols., Beirut, 1405/1985, vol. 7, p. 291. For a detailed discussion of these traditions, of those that justify them and other sources recording them see Y. Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood", pp. 187-190; id., *Prophecy Continuous*, pp. 58sqq.; C. Gilliot, "Miscellanea corancia I", pp. 119-20, especially footnote 64; U. Rubin, "The Seal of the Prophets", part 3 ("Ibrāhīm's prophecy") which supports the traditional Islamic point of view that Ibrāhīm died young, because according to God's will Muḥammad had to be the last prophet.

57   See C. Addas, "Baḥîrâ" in M.A. Amir-Moezzi (dir.), *Dictionnaire du Coran*, pp. 105-109.

58   *Bihi khatama llāhu man qablahu/ wa man baʿdahu min nabiyyin khatam*, in *Umajja ibn Abi ṣ-Ṣalt. Die unter seinem Namen überlieferten Gedichtfragmente*, ed. Schulthess, Leipzig, 1911, p. 24, verse 12. As is the case of other ancient poets, the authenticity of Ibn Abī al-Ṣalt's poems remains problematic (for the latest state of play see T. Seidensticker, "The Authenticity of the Poems ascribed to Umayya ibn Abī al-Ṣalt", in J.R. Smart (ed.), *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Language and Literature*, Richmond, 1996, pp. 88-102; N. Sinai, "Religious poetry from the Quranic milieu: Umayya b. Abī al-Ṣalt on the fate of the Thamūd", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 74/3 (2011), pp. 396-419). While there are doubts about the attribution of these verses, researchers are unanimous in dating them back to the first two Hijri centuries and that is the point that is

in which the meaning of the term 'seal' is ambiguous.[59] In the *Naqāʾiḍ* of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, the word is in the plural and Muḥammad is called *khayr al-khawātim*, "the best of seals".[60] Likewise, Abū Riyāsh al-Qaysī, who wrote as late as the 4th/10th century affirms, in his commentary on the *Hāshimiyyāt* poems of al-Kumayt b. Zayd al-Asadī, that 'Seal of the Prophets' means 'the best (literally the beauty) of the prophets' (*khātam al-anbiyāʾ fa-huwa jamāl al-anbiyāʾ*).[61]

Of course, texts and traditions of that kind will later on be interpreted, with greater or less subtlety, to show that they confirm the dogma of 'Muḥammad, the last of the prophets'. But the problematic character of the Quranic verse which was used to create it and ambiguity of the expression 'Seal of the prophets' which it contains both seem undeniable. The recent monograph by David Powers devoted to that verse and titled precisely *Muḥammad is not the Father of any of your Men: The Making of the Last Prophet*,[62] is an attempt, using impressive scholarship and sophisticated argument, to prove that verse 33:40 is a late addition, whose main purpose is to establish the dogma of the last prophet. Without necessarily agreeing with the methods or the conclusions of this book, it does bring into focus the scale of the problems raised by the expression in the beginnings of Islam. His study, like many others since the end of the 19th century, as we have just seen, are all evidence of the extreme complexity of the subject and its eventful history.[63] These researches, based as they are on a great number of often very old Islamic sources, show that the Shiʿi were not alone in professing the continuation of prophecy after the death of Muḥammad, in the first islamic centuries.

relevant to my examination: during the first times of Islam, the expression *khātim/ khātam al-anbiyāʾ* did not mean "the last of the prophets" for everyone. See Y. Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood", pp. 184; U. Rubin, "The Seal of the Prophets", part 7.1 ("Umayya b. Abī l-Ṣalt") who, in order to justify the traditional Islamic point of view, comments the verse as implicitly announcing the future coming of Jesus.

59   Y. Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood", pp. 185-186.

60   *The Naqāʾiḍ of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq*, ed. A. Bevan, Leiden, 1908-1912, vol. 1, p. 349. The commentator of the verse (who according to Friedmann is Abū ʿUbayda, d. 209/824-825) declares that "the seal of prophets means the best among the prophets" (... *khātim/ khātam al-anbiyāʾ wa huwa khayr al-anbiyāʾ*).

61   *Die Hāshimijjāt des Kumait*, ed. Horowitz, Leiden, 1904, p. 85.

62   D.S.Powers, *Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men. The making of the last Prophet*, Philadelphia, 2009; also now see D.S. Powers, "Sinless, Sonless and Seal of Prophets: Muḥammad and Kor. 33, 36-40, Revisited", *Arabica* 67/4 (2020), pp. 333-408.

63   See above footnote 45 (among the studies cited in that footnote only Uri Rubin's study goes unambiguously in the same direction as "orthodox" Islamic tradition according to which the expression would have always meant, quite clearly, "the last of the prophets").

4   Epilogue

What can we conclude? In the end, the doctrine of the end of prophecy after
the arrival of Islam, probably first proposed after the death of Muḥammad,
was accepted by all Muslims, including Shiʿis (with the notable exception of
certain Ismaili currents),[64] perhaps by the 2nd and 3rd Hijri centuries. This
quasi-unanimity was the result of state repression, the consequence of many
centuries of bloody conflicts. Indeed, the history of the birth of Islam is marked
by centuries of violence, by the endless civil wars, which inevitably had a deci-
sive influence on the genesis and development of scriptural texts and doc-
trines.[65] Y. Friedmann insists on the importance of numerous 'false prophets'
('false' for the Muslim authorities of course) and the wars waged against them
by the central power, in the development of the dogmatic definition of *khatm
al-nubuwwa* as the 'end of prophecy'.[66] Just after the death of the Prophet there
were the prophetess Sajāḥ and the prophets Musaylima, al-Aswad al-ʿAnsī
and Ṭulayḥa b. Khuwaylid, against whom the first caliph Abū Bakr waged
the bloody "wars of sedition" (*ḥurūb al-ridda*). Later a whole series of rebels
declared themselves prophets and messengers of God. Such were al-Ḥārith b.
Saʿīd under the Ummayyads; Muḥammad b. Saʿīd, 'the crucified' (*al-maṣlūb*);
Hāshim b. al-Ḥakīm, 'the veiled one' (*al-muqannaʿ*) and Maḥmūd b. al-Faraj
under the Abbassids. However, the number of rebels belonging to one or the
other of the many different ʿAlid/Shiʿi sects and claiming to be prophets is
higher by far than in any of the other religious or political groups. We have
already mentioned the names of some of them (see above footnote 38 and
relevant text). There were, among many others, the revolts of al-Mukhtār b. Abī
ʿUbayd, ʿAbdallāh b. Muʿāwiya, Mughīra b. Saʿīd, and Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl,
grandson of Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, believed to be a prophet by many Sevener
Shiʿis, notably the Qarmatians. The history of the Umayyad and Abbassid
caliphates is replete with accounts of their rebellions, of their pretentions to

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64   With certain variations, given the diversity of currents, Ismaili doctrine maintains that
      Muḥammad is the prophet of the sixth cycle, which is that of the occultation of esoteric
      truths (*dawr al-sitr*), and Islam is the religion of the same cycle. There will thus be, after
      Muḥammad and Islam, a resurrector-prophet (*qāʾim*) and a religion of a seventh and last
      cycle, that of unveiling (*dawr al-kashf*).

65   This is the main subject of Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*.

66   Y. Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood", pp. 193 sqq.; on the vigour of prophecy and
      prophets in Arabia just before and during the life of Muḥammad see now C.J. Robin,
      "Les signes de la prophétie en Arabie à l'époque de Muḥammad (fin du VIᵉ et début du
      VIIᵉ siècle de l'ère chrétienne)", in S. Georgoudi, R. Koch-Piettre and F. Schmidt (eds.),
      La raison des signes. Présages, rites, destin dans les sociétés de la Méditerranée ancienne,
      Leiden-Boston, 2012, pp. 433-476.

prophetic status, advanced by themselves or by their supporters, and their ferocious repression by the caliphal armies.[67]

It is reasonable to suppose that the dogma of 'the end of prophecy' may have had its beginnings at the time of the 'wars of sedition', in the circles of caliphal power in Medina, in an effort to invalidate the claims of their adversaries. However, the centuries-long ambiguity, even uncertainty, of the meaning of the term *khātam/khātim* in the Quranic verse under consideration, clearly shows why the official definition was much resisted and was slow to be accepted by all believers. The physical and doctrinal repression of the Shi'is in general and of their 'heresiarchs' in particular, those figures who S.M. Wasserstrom calls 'the revolutionary thaumaturges', was certainly a factor in the final imposition of that unanimity.[68]

The stakes were immense: the establishment of the criteria by which the right of the religious and political authority to govern the community would be legitimized. For the caliphal power and the jurists-theologians who supported it, and who together came to represent Sunnism, prophecy had ended because all the terms and the directives, divine as well as prophetic, which justified their power, were now set in stone in the approved Quran and the 'authentic' Hadith. For the Shi'is, and some other smaller movements, the spiritual and temporal leadership of the faithful could be ensured, not by texts whose authenticity was in any case problematic for them, but rather by inspired men, divine sages, with at their head the person of the infallible Imam. Now, for the Sunni and its theologians, managing scriptural writings (developed furthermore under their control), imposing their authority and presenting themselves as their sole guardians was easier than to control Shi'i faithful claiming to be in direct communication with the source of the Scriptures and possessing real social influence. It was hence necessary to suppress at all costs the claims to prophecy, most often inspired by Shi'i imamology, of certain opponents at the political level, and, at the religious level, to impose on all the doctrine of the end of prophecy.

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67   See studies mentioned in footnote 38. Also Gh.Ḥ. Ṣadīqī, *Jonbesh hā-ye dīnī-ye īrānī dar qarn hā-ye dovvom va sevvom-e hejrī*, Tehran, 1372 solar/1993 (completed version updated of the doctoral thesis of the author: G.H. Sadighi, *Les mouvements religieux iraniens aux IIe et IIIe siècle de l'hégire*, Paris, 1938); F. Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines*, Cambridge, 2007² (1st ed. 1990), especially index s.v. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq.

68   S.M. Wasserstrom, "The Moving Finger Writes: Mughīra b. Saʿīd's Islamic Gnosis and the Myths of its Rejection", *History of Religions* 25/1 (1985), pp. 62-90; also Id., "'The Shīʿīs are the Jews of our Community': An Interreligious Comparison within Sunnī Thought", *Israel Oriental Studies* 14 (1994), pp. 297-324 (now in Id., *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam*, Princeton, 1995, chap. 3).

The latter was also accepted by Shiʿism, or in any case by its main branches, and at least in appearance. It is indeed noteworthy that all the Shiʿi interpretations of Quran verse 33:40 (containing the famous expression "Seal of Prophets"), both in pre- or post-Buyid sources, appear to have scrupulously respected it. But is this not a case of *taqiyya*, especially in pre-Buyyid interpretations[69] Indeed, the idea of a final rupture of communication between Heaven and the Sage was apparently intolerable for the Imams and their followers. Heirs to a good number of doctrines from Judeo-Christianity, Manicheism and Late Antique Gnostic movements, seeing themselves as divine initiates into, and representatives of, a religion of knowledge, they would have nuanced their beliefs about prophecy and safeguarded the possibility of heavenly communication by applying to it the rules of *taqiyya*, the keeping of the secret.[70] The prophet sees and hears the angels, whereas the *muḥaddath*-Imam – who is never called "prophet" – can only hear the celestial messenger; the prophet receives revelation (*waḥy*) whereas the Imam is able to receive inspiration (*ilhām*); the prophet is the messenger of the letter of the Divine Word (*tanzīl*) in its manifest, exoteric aspect (*ẓāhir*), whereas the imam is the inspired messenger of its spirit, possessing the knowledge of its esoteric, 'secret' dimension (*bāṭin*), its spiritual interpretation (*taʾwīl*); the prophet is the legislator and the upholder of the manifest external religion for the majority of the faithful (*al-ʿāmma, al-akthar*), whereas the imam is the Master of hermeneutics, the inspirer of the interiorised religion of a minority of elites (*al-khāṣṣa, al-aqall*).[71] At the same time, as we have seen, the imam fully possesses the prophetic powers (and teaches them to his initiates): and, according to the 'heresiarchs', is capable of celestial ascension, communication with heavenly entities, knowledge of the future, all kinds of miraculous and thaumaturgic powers, etc. But in order to clearly distinguish his status from that of the prophet, the term used to qualify his nature is *walāya* (divine alliance or friendship), an extension, at the

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69   On the turning point of the Buyid era in the doctrinal evolution of Imami Shiʿism, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 33 sqq.; Id. and Ch. Jambet, *Qu'est-ce que le Shiʿisme?*, Paris, 2004, part III,1; on pre-Buyid Imami Quranic exegeses, see Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shiism*.

70   In a recent article, M. Ebstein pertinently proposes the hypothesis that the dissimulation of religious practices in pious circles of the early times of Islam was directly linked to the violence of the civil wars of that period (see his article "Absent yet All Times Present …").

71   See M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin* and *La Religion discrète*, index *s.v.*; I. Poonawala, "Ismāʿīlī *taʾwīl* of the Qurʾān", in A. Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, Oxford, 1988, pp. 199-222; E. Kohlberg, "In Praise of the Few", in G.R. Hawting, J.A. Mojaddedi and A. Samely (eds.), *Studies in Islamic and Middle Eastern Texts and Traditions. In Memory of Norman Calder, Journal of Semitic Studies* Supplement 12 (2000), pp. 149-162 (and now id., *In Praise of the Few*, chap. 14).

esoteric level, of *nubuwwa*, but distinct from it, and transmitted from generation to generation by the Sacred Legacy, the *waṣiyya*.[72]

Later Shi'ism gradually came to make a distinction between a legislative prophecy (*nubuwwa tashrī'iyya*) and an ontological non-legislating prophecy (*nubuwwa takwīniyya*) for which the name is *walāya*.[73] It thus seemed to adopt, in a manner of speaking, the old Jewish distinction, made, according to E.E. Urbach, after the advent of Christianity, between legislating prophecy, with authority over religious doctrine, and non-legislating innovative prophecy, without any legislative power.[74] Sunni orthodoxy later categorically and often aggressively rejected these doctrines.[75] The followers of the Imams, for

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72   On *walāya*, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Notes à propos de la walāya imamite" (= *Religion discrète*, chap. 7); on *waṣiyya*, see U. Rubin's seminal article "Prophets and Progenitors in the Early Shī'a Tradition", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 1 (1979), pp. 41-65; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, index s.v. *waṣî, awṣiyâ', waṣiyya*. On the notion as an extension, in Islam, of the Holy Spirit and/or the Paraclete in Montanist and Manichean doctrines, see Van Reeth, "La typologie du prophète selon le Coran: le cas de Jésus", pp. 95 sqq. (the author does not take Shi'i doctrines specifically into account).

73   For a documented presentation of the history of this issue, see 'A.K. Sorūsh, *Basṭ-e tajrebe-ye nabavī*, Tehran, 3rd ed., 1379 solar/2000, mainly introduction and chap. 1. Note that within the "rationalist" (Uṣūlī) branch of Imamism, where, since the Buyid period, the figure of the jurist-theologian will gradually replace that of the Imam, now in occultation, jurists will finally claim the status of *walāya*, traditionally reserved for the Imams, by in turn distinguishing between *walāya takwīniyya* ("ontological/creative alliance", exclusively reserved for prophets and imams) and *walāya tashrī'iyya* or *i'tibāriyya* ("legislating" or "relative alliance", shared between the Imams and the jurists); see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *La Religion discrète*, p. 204, footnote 125 and now especially S. Rizvi, "'Seeking the Face of God': the Safawid Ḥikmat Tradition's Conceptualisation of *Walāya Takwīniyya*", in F. Daftary and G. Miskinzoda (eds.), *The Study of Shi'i Islam. History, Theology and Law*, London-New York, 2014, pp. 391-410.

74   E.E. Urbach, "Matay pasqah ha-nevu'ah" ("When did the prophecy end?"), (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 17 (1946-1947), pp. 1-11; Id., "Halakhah u-nevu'ah" ("Law and Prophecy"), (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 18 (1947-1948), pp. 1-27 (cited by Y. Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood", pp. 197-198). It is to be noted that Jewish thinkers seems to have started theorizing this question from the moment they considered emerging Christianity to be a threat to the authority and legitimacy of their own religion.

75   However Sunni mysticism, in its different forms and especially in Sufism, heir to many Shi'i doctrines and practices, adapted them under one shape or other by often purging them of their all too manifestly Shi'i traits. Just like the Shi'i initiate, the mystical saint is able to enter into communication with God and the celestial beings and to receive inspiration, knowledge and miraculous powers. The mystic al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. around 310/922) goes so far as to create the expression *khatm al-walāya* ("Seal of Sainthood") and to build upon it a real doctrine of sainthood (see G. Gobillot, "Le Mahdî, le *khatm al-awliyâ'* et le *Quṭb*. Evolution des notions entre sunnisme et chiisme", *Mélanges de science religieuse* 59 (2002), pp. 5-31; Id., "Sceau des prophètes", in M.A. Amir-Moezzi (dir.), *Dictionnaire du Coran*, pp. 795-797). The great mystical thinker Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638/1240) distinguishes

many centuries the victims of bloody repression, marginalized and ostracized by an ever more rigid official majority religion, seem to have been obliged to apply *taqiyya* to many of their most important doctrines. The continuity of prophecy, a crucial religious idea inherited from many spiritual traditions of Late Antiquity, was probably at the center of their beliefs.

I will end by examining a tradition which describes a meeting between the first and ideal Imam ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and a Greek convert, claiming to be knowledgeable in philosophy and medicine (*rajul min al-yūnāniyyīn al-muddaʿīn li-l-falsafa wa l-ṭibb*), which provides a good illustration of some aspects of this discussion. It is a long dialogue between the two men, recorded in one of the oldest Shiʿi Quranic commentaries, the *Tafsīr*, attributed to the eleventh imam of the Twelvers, al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (d. 260/874). I will only quote here the moment in the conversation where ʿAlī enjoins the 'keeping of the secret' on his disciple:

> I order you to practice *taqiyya* in your religion, for God, the Most-High, said: 'Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends, rather than the believers – for he whose does that belongs not to God in anything – unless you have a fear of them. (Quran 3:28)'. So I permit you to prefer our enemies to ourselves, and if fear drives you to it, to dissociate yourself openly from us, and if fear brings you to it, to leave the prescribed prayers, if you fear threats and dangers to your well-being. The preference that

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between legislating prophecy (*nubuwwat al-tashrīʿ*) and general or free prophecy (*nubuwwat ʿāmma/muṭlaqa*) (M. Chodkiewicz, *Le Sceau des Saints. Prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d'Ibn ʿArabî*, Paris, 1986, index *s.v.*). The examples are numerous. In an important article, Orkhan Mir-Kasimov examines two modes of relationship between Heaven and the Sage by calling them respectively: "Word of Descent" and "Word of ascent" ("The Word of Descent and the Word of Ascent in the Spectrum of the Sacred Texts in Islam", in D. De Smet et M.A. Amir-Moezzi (eds), *Controverses*, pp. 329-372). The rupture of any relationship between the believer and God, after the death of Muḥammad, has also been painfully felt outside mystical and esoterical circles. Sunni traditionalist authorities elaborate different doctrines in order to nuance the official definition of "the end of prophecy" and to alleviate the pain of a certain number of pious believers, while attempting to consolidate it at the same time (A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam. A Reconsideration of the Sources with a Special Reference to the Divine Sayings or ḥadīth qudsī*, The Hague-Paris, 1977, pp. 32 sqq. and 51 sqq.; Y. Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood", pp. 199 sqq.; M. Yahia, *Šāfiʿî et les deux sources de la Loi*, Turnhout, 2009, pp. 423-428). It is to be noted that neither doctrinal rigidification nor political repression were able to prevent the resurgence of numerous prophets announcing the advent of a new religion in the lands of Islam from the Middle Ages until modern times. Finally, we have seen the case of Ismailism where another prophet and another religion are awaited after Muḥammad and Islam.

you show externally to our enemies and not to us, because of your fear, is of no use to them and is of no harm to us. For the fact that you disassociate yourself openly from us by practicing *taqiyya* does not imply any offence against us and is not harmful to us. If you distance yourself temporarily from us with your tongue while you remain faithful to us in your heart…, you act in a much better way than if you had exposed yourself to destruction, for then you would be acting for the religion and prosperity of your brothers, the believers. Be wary, I repeat, be wary of neglecting *taqiyya*, I order you to observe it, for you would shed your blood in vain and the blood of your brothers, and you would expose your well-being and theirs to perdition, by putting them in the hands of the enemies of the religion of God.[76]

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76 *Al-Tafsīr al-mansūb ilā l-imām Abī Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-ʿAskarī*, Qumm, 1409/1988, pp. 175-176; French trans. by D. De Smet, "La pratique de taqiyya", pp. 151-152. On this Quranic commentary see M.M. Bar-Asher, "The Qurʾān Commentary Ascribed to Imam Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 24(2000), pp. 358-379; Ḥ. Anṣārī, "Taḥqīqī dar bāre-ye mansha'-e matne mowjūd-e Tafsīr-e mansūb be emām Ḥasan-e ʿAskarī"; Id. "*Tafsīr al-ʿAskarī* čegūneh pardākhteh shod?", http://ansari.kateban .com; "Bar-resī ḫā-ye tārīkhī" (consulted in April 2017).

PART 3

Spiritual Horizons

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CHAPTER 8

The Precious Pearl Attributed to Rajab al-Bursī: 500 Quranic Verses about ʿAlī

Devotion to ʿAlī, the imam *par excellence*, sacred figure and theophanic man, permeates all of Shiʿi spirituality. Even many centuries after the period of the historical imams and well into that of the domination of the rationalist tradition, in which the authority of the jurist-theologian tended to replace the *walāya* of the imams, ʿAlī remained at the heart of the inner life of the faithful. Some major authors have played a central role in the elaboration and the transmission of what may be called the mysticism of ʿAlī. Rajab al-Bursī, the great architect of the convergence of Shiʿism, Sufism and philosophy is without doubt one of them.

1 Brief Notes on al-Bursī and His Major Work *Mashāriq al-anwār*

In the 8th/14th and 9th/15th centuries, esoteric Shiʿi thought experienced a golden age. Among its great figures who left their mark on it, it is worth mentioning Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmolī (d. *circa* 790/1388), the architect of a great synthesis between Shiʿism and a Sufism profoundly influenced by Ibn ʿArabī; Faḍlallāh Astarābādī (d. 796/1394), founder of the Ḥurūfiyya school; and Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsāʾī (838-906/1434-1501), master of the synthesis between Sufism, Avicennian philosophy and Shiʿi theosophy.[1]

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[1] On Ḥaydar Āmolī, see for example H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, Paris, 1972, vol. III, "Les fidèles d'amour. Shîʿisme et soufisme", Livre IV, 1 (Haydar Âmolî (VIIIe/XIVe siècle), théologien shîʿite du soufisme), pp. 149-213; Id., *Temple et contemplation. Essais sur l'islam iranien*, "La science de la Balance et les correspondances entre les mondes en gnose islamique (d'après l'œuvre de Haydar Âmolî (VIIIe/XIVe siècle))", pp. 67-141; P. Antes, *Zur Theologie des Schiʿa, Eine Untersu-chung des* Jāmiʿ al-asrār wa manbaʿ al-anwār *von Sayyid Ḥaidar Āmolī*, Freiburg, 1971; E. Kohlberg, "Āmolī, Sayyed Bahāʾ al-Dīn", *Encyclopedia Iranica*; Kh.ʿA. Ḥamiyya, *al-ʿIrfān al-shīʿī. Dirāsat fī l-ḥayāt al-rūḥiyya wa l-fikriyya li-Ḥaydar al-Āmulī*, Beirut, 1425/2004; M. Terrier, Āmulī, Sayyid Ḥaydar, H. Lagerlund (ed.), Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1151-5_585-1. On Faḍlallāh Astarābādī, see now Sh. Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis*, Oxford, 2005; O. Mir-Kasimov, *Words of Power. Ḥurūfī Teachings Between Shiʿism and Sufism in Medieval Islam: the Original Doctrine of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī*, London-New York, 2015. On Ibn Abī Jumhūr, see for example W. Madelung, "Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsāʾī's Synthesis of Kalām, Philosophy and Sufism", in *La signification du Bas*

The end of the Middle Ages was also the period of our author, al-Ḥāfiẓ Rajab al-Bursī (flourishing in 813/1410-1411). An important mystical thinker, his work was first made known to Western academic research circles – once again – by Henry Corbin, in the seminars he gave from 1968 to 1970 at the École Pratique des Hautes Études at the Sorbonne.[2] The partial translation of al-Bursī's major work, the *Mashāriq al-anwār*, which Corbin made in the course of these seminars, was published posthumously in 1996, excellently edited with an introduction by Pierre Lory.[3] Meanwhile, Todd Lawson wrote a first fine article on this capital work, which included some excellent pages on the life and work of al-Bursī.[4] More recently, Pierre Lory, again, has published a brief but very profound study on some aspects of the esoteric thought of the author.[5] Apart from works in Western languages, the most substantial studies of al-Bursī and his work are those in Arabic by Kāmil Muṣṭafā al-Shaybī in two essential works, at present unjustly neglected even if slightly outdated, on the relations between Sufism and Shi'ism.[6]

Despite the importance and wide range of his thought, the life of Rajab al-Bursī is mostly unknown and almost all the existing information about him

    Moyen-Âge dans l'histoire et la culture du monde musulman (Acte du 8ᵉ congrès de l'Union Euro péenne des Arabisants et Islamisants), Aix-en-Provence, 1978, pp. 147-156 (reprint in Id., *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam*, London, Variorum Reprints, 1985, article nᵒ 13).; S. Schmidtke, *Theologie, Philosophie und Mystik im zwölferShi'itischen Islam des 9./15. Jahrhunderts. Die Gedankenwelten des Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsā'ī* (*um 838/1434-35 nach 906/1501*), Leiden, 2000; Id., "New Sources for the Life and Work of Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsā'ī", *Studia Islamica* 38 (2009), pp. 49-68.

2 See now H. Corbin, *Itinéraire d'un enseignement*, Tehran, 1993, pp. 104-107 and 111-118.

3 Rajab Borsi, *Les Orients des Lumières*, translated from Arabic by H. Corbin, edition established and introduced by P. Lory, Paris-Lagrasse, 1996.

4 T.B. Lawson, "*The Dawning Places of the Lights of Certainty in the Divine Secrets Connected with the Commander of the Faithful* by Rajab Bursî", in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, London-New York, 1992, pp. 261-276.

5 P. Lory, "Souffrir pour la vérité selon l'ésotérisme chiite de Rajab Borsî", in M.A. Amir-Moezzi, M.M. Bar-Asher & S. Hopkins (eds.), *Le shî'isme imâmite quarante ans après. Hommage à Etan Kohlberg*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études vol. 137, Turnhout, 2009, pp. 315-323; M. Terrier, "Bursī, al-Ḥāfiẓ Rajab al", H. Lagerlund (ed.), Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1151-5_586-1. Finally, in an erudite article, Sajjad Rizvi shows the importance of al-Bursi's work as the starting point for the development of mystical and esoteric thought in the Safavid period: S. Rizvi, "Esoteric Shi'i Islam in the Later School of al-Ḥilla: *Walāya* and Apocalypticism in al-Ḥasan b. Sulaymān al-Ḥillī (d. after 1399) and Rajab al-Bursī (d.c. 1411)" in R. Adem & E. Hayes (eds.), *Reason, Estericism and Authority in Shi'i Islam*, Leiden, 2021, pp. 190-241.

6 K.M. al-Shaybī, *al-Ṣila bayn al-taṣawwuf wa l-tashayyu'*, reprint. Beirut, 1982 (first ed., Bagdad, 2 vols., 1963-64), vol. 2, pp. 224-256; id., *al-Fikr al-shī'ī wa l-naza'āt al-ṣūfiyya ḥattā maṭla' al-qarn al-thānī 'ashar al-hijrī*, Bagdad, 1386/ 1966, pp. 25 *ff*.

must be treated with caution, despite there being a significant number of references to him and his works in some prosopographical, bibliographical or doctrinal writings.[7]

Raḍī al-Dīn Rajab b. Muḥammad b. Rajab al-Ḥillī al-Bursī is known mainly thanks to his famous work, mentioned above, *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn fī ḥaqāʾiq asrār amīr al-muʾminīn* ("the Orients of the Lights of Certainty Concerning the Realities of the Secrets of the Commander of the Faithful") which, as its title indicates, is a work devoted to the figure of ʿAlī, considered here as the Perfect Man (in agreement with the thought of Ibn ʿArabī) and the highest 'locus of manifestation of God'.[8] It is in this book that the author refers to himself as 'Rajab al-Ḥāfiẓ' (that is 'Rajab the traditionist', 'Rajab, expert in Hadith'), "al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Bursī" or also "al-Ḥāfiẓ".[9] He is said to have been born in the village of Burs in the Shiʿi heartland of Iraq, between Ḥilla and Kūfa, around the year 743/1342, perhaps, according to al-Shaybī, in a family of Iranian origin, and to have studied in Ḥilla before migrating to Iran around 780/1378, probably wearied by the vociferations of his all too "exotericist" correligionaries, to seek

7 For example (in alphabetical order; for the complete references, see the general bibliography at the end of this volume) Afandī/Efendī al-Jīrānī, ʿAbdallāh b. ʿĪsā, *Riyāḍ al-ʿulamāʾ*, vol. 2, pp. 304 *ff.* (the most extensive record); al-Amīn, Muḥsin, *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*, vol. 31, pp. 193 *ff.*; al-Amīnī ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn, *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 6, pp. 33 *ff.* et vol. 7, pp. 50 *ff.* and index *s.n.*; al-Baḥrānī, Hāshim, *Ḥilyat al-abrār*, especially vol. 2, pp. 128 *ff.*, etc. (when all the pages are not indicated refer to the table of contents or the index of the work *sub* Bursī or *Mashāriq*); Id., *Madīnat al-maʿājiz*, vol. 1, pp. 228, 230, 253; al-Burūjirdī, *Ṭarāʾif al-maqāl*; al-Daylamī, al-Ḥasan, *Irshād al-qulūb*; al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Kalimāt maknūna*; al-Ḥasanī, Hāshim Maʿrūf, *al-Mawḍūʿāt fī l-āthār wa l-akhbār*, pp. 293 *ff.*; al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Amal al-āmil*, vol. 2, pp. 44 and 117 *ff.*; Id., *Ithbāt al-hudāt*; Id., *al-Jawāhir al-saniyya*, pp. 30, 195, 526 *ff.*; id., *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*; al-Jazāʾirī, Niʿmatullāh, *al-Anwār al-nuʿmāniyya*; al-Kafʿamī, Taqī al-Dīn, *al-Maqām al-asnā*; Id., *al-Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 46, 78, 91 *ff.*; Kantūrī, Iʿjāz Ḥusayn, *Kashf al-ḥujub wa l-astār*, pp. 479 *ff.*; Khʷānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, vol. 3, pp. 327-345; ʿA. Khāqānī, *Shuʿarāʾ al-Ḥilla*; al-Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir, *Biḥār al-anwār*, especially "al-Madkhal", vol. 1, pp. 10 *ff.*; Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh, *Ṭarāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq*, vol. 2, pp. 114 *ff.*; Mudarris Tabrīzī, *Rayḥānat al-adab*, vol. 2, p. 11; al-Qummī, al-Shaykh ʿAbbās, *al-Fawāʾid al-riḍawiyya*, pp. 178 *ff.*; Id., *al-Kunā wa l-alqāb*, vol. 2, pp. 305 *ff.*; al-Ṭihrānī, Āghā Bozorg, *al-Dharīʿa* (multiple records, written under different titles, of the works of our author). I shall attempt to make a short synthesis of the information contained in the sources, while in some aspects complementing, modern research about al-Bursī mentioned above.
8 On these issues, see the studies by Corbin, Lawson and Lory mentioned above in footnotes 3, 4 and 5. Since the end of the 19th century, the book has been edited a dozen times, notably in India, Iran and Lebanon. The last ones are by ʿAlī ʿĀshūr, Beirut, 1419/1999 and by ʿAbd al-Ghaffār Ashraf al-Māzandarānī, Qumm, 1426/ 2005. I here use the Beirut edition published in 1379/1959.
9 Al-Bursī, *Mashāriq*, p. 5 and 14 and the poems of the author, edited in the appendix, p. 240, 246 and 247.

refuge in Khurāsān, in the short-lived "heterodox" Shiʿi state of the Sarbedārs. He is then said to have moved to Ṭūs/Mashhad, not far from the mausoleum of the eighth imam of the Twelvers, ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (d. 203/818), to dedicate himself to a life of piety, meditation and writing. According to al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, al-Bursī is said to have written the first version of his *Mashāriq* in 773/1371-72 and a second and definitive version, this time according to Afandī/Efendī, in 813/1410-11.[10] He probably died of natural causes some time afterwards. A story that he was assassinated does not seem at all credible. According to most biographers, his grave is in Ṭūs but, according to al-Khʷānsārī, the mausoleum said to be that of Ḥāfiẓ Rajab in Ardestān north of Isfahan in Central Iran may in fact be his.[11]

Rajab al-Bursī is counted by Henry Corbin among the greatest representatives of Twelver Shiʿi metaphysical gnosis. His *Mashāriq* certainly contains profound theological, philosophical and numerological speculations by an author deeply versed in Islamic occult sciences, notably the interpretation of letters of the alphabet, and in different Sufi currents, ranging from the school of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā in the Muslim Orient to the works of Ibn ʿArabī in the West, on the one hand, and from the Islamic Neo-Platonism of al-Fārābī and from Avicenna to al-Suhrawardī, on the other. Distancing himself both from exotericist Shiʿis (*ahl al-tafrīṭ*, literally: "the people of reduction") as from extremist esotericists (*ahl al-ifrāṭ*, lit.: "the people of excess", i.e. the *ghulāt*), al-Bursī described himself as belonging to the "middle path" (*al-namṭ al-awsaṭ*) of the Twelver faithful, whom he identified with the People of Knowledge, of salvationist gnosis (*al-ʿārifūn*).[12] He was however fully aware that his positions would not be tolerated by many Muslims, including Shiʿis, and that his writings would be accused of one form or another of heresy.[13] His doctrinal position accounts for the ambiguous attitude of some Imami authors towards him. For example, his *Mashāriq* were already quoted and exploited a few decades after his death, by an author as important as the traditionalist and theologian Taqī al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Kafʿamī around the years 890/1484-85 and also later by

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10   Respectively: *Amal al-āmil*, vol. 2, p. 117 and *Riyāḍ al-ʿulamāʾ*, vol. 2, p. 307. Note, however, that in the *Fihrist-e nuskha hā-ye khaṭṭī-ye ketābkhāne-ye markazī-ye dāneshgāh-e Tehrān* (numerous editions; for the list of catalogues of manuscripts see the bibliography), vol. 12, manuscript nº 2598 of the *Mashāriq*, considered (erroneously?) as being an autograph, is dated 815 Hijrah. Cf. al-Shaybī, *al-Fikr al-shīʿī*, p. 258 and footnotes, who speaks of an autographed manuscript dating from 768/1367, written under the reign of the last Sarbedār ruler, ʿAlī al-Muʾayyad.

11   *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, vol. 3, p. 330; cf. al-Qummī, al-Shaykh ʿAbbās, *al-Fawāʾid al-riḍawiyya*, p. 380.

12   *Mashāriq*, p. 198 and pp. 213-215.

13   *Ibid.*, p. 14 and 42.

traditionalist philosopher al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī in the 11th/17th century.[14] However, it was three centuries after his death that a bio-bibliographical record was written about him, in this case by al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1104/1693) and Afandī/Efendī al-Jīrānī (d. 1130/1718). Al-Ḥurr in particular very frequently quoted al-Bursī and his writings in his *Jawāhir al-saniyya* and in his *Ithbāt al-hudāt* but did not hesitate to stress, in his *Amal al-ʿāmil* and in his *Wasāʾil*, that, in the *Mashāriq*, some detected extremist Shiʿi doctrines, *al-ghuluww*, and that al-Bursī could not be considered to be a trustworthy transmitter of hadith.[15] Al-Majlisī took the same attitude in his *Biḥār*.[16] Others, on the other hand, defended his Shiʿi "orthodoxy" while at the same time stressing a certain originality in his work.[17] Finally, the authoritive al-Khʷānsārī declared himself to be in violent opposition to those who abused the term extremism in rejecting doctrines which were among the indispensable articles of faith in Shiʿism and bestowed on Rajab al-Bursī the most flattering titles of the greatest spiritual masters.[18] In fact, the technical arguments of the Hadith experts against the credibility of al-Bursī as a transmitter of hadith, mostly concern hadiths recorded by him, notably in his *Mashāriq*, which are found nowhere else in the authoritative Shiʿi compilations. This is notably the case of many sermons attributed to ʿAlī, such as the *khuṭbat al-iftikhār* or the *khuṭbat al-taṭanjiyya*, in which the first imam declared his theophanic identity with God.[19] All this seems to yet again prove, if need be, that so far as the fundamental imamological doctrines are concerned, the distinction between "moderate" and "extremist" turns out to be artificial.[20] We have already drawn attention to the many editions of the *Mashāriq* (see above footnote 8). The work quickly became very popular, especially in mystical and philosophical circles in Shiʿi Iran. There is a monumental commented Persian paraphrase of it, entitled *Maṭāliʿ al-asrār* and written by a certain al-Ḥasan al-Khaṭīb al-Kirmānī (also known as al-Sabziwārī or

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14 Numerous citations in *al-Miṣbāḥ* and *al-Maqām al-asnā* of the first and in the *Kalimāt maknūna* of the second.

15 *Amal al-āmil*, vol. 2, p. 117; *Wasāʾil al-shīʿa*, vol. 30, pp. 159-160.

16 *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 1, p. 10 and vol. 42, pp. 300-301.

17 Al-Amīnī, *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 7, pp. 33-34; al-Burūjirdī, *Ṭarāʾif*, vol. 2, p. 162.

18 *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, vol. 3, pp. 33 *ff.*: *al-mawlā al-ʿālim … al-murshid al-kāmil … al-quṭb al-wāqif … al-ʿārif al-qudsī …* ("the great wise master … the perfect spiritual guide … the solidly established pole … the gnostic saint …"; passage cited also by Lawson, *art. cit.*, footnote 8, p. 263).

19 On these sermons of ʿAlī, see here, chap. 4.

20 I have examined this issue from many perspectives in many publications; see for example M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, index *s.v. ghâlî, ghulât, ghuluww*; Id., *La religion discrète*, index *s.v. ghuluww*; Id., *Le Coran silencieux*, index *s.v. ghuluww*; Id., "Les Imams et les Ghulāt", *SSR* 4/1-2 (2020), pp. 5-38.

al-Mashhadī). It was written in 1090/1680 on the orders of the Safavid ruler
Shāh Sulaymān.[21] An unedited summary of it exists in Persian. It was written
in 1286/1869 by a certain Muḥammad Zamān ʿĀrif, also called ʿSāqīʾ, and oth-
erwise unknown.[22] Finally, it is to be noted that certain manuscripts of the
Mashāriq seem to have other titles, for instance *Asrār al-aʾimma* ('Secrets of
the Imams'), *Asrār al-ḥurūf* ('Secrets of Letters') or *Khafī/Akhfā al-asrār* ('The
(most) hidden of Secrets').[23]

2   Other Works and the Quranic Commentary "The Precious Pearl" (*al-Durr al-thamīn*)

The *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn* is the only work whose attribution to Rajab al-Bursī
does not appear problematic. Other writings attributed to him are either not
authenticated or, in some cases, even found. It should also be noted that those
which are more or less certainly his are all in Arabic.[24] In this respect, the infor-
mation available in both the manuscript tradition and the prosopographical
and bibliographical records is most confusing: one book may have several titles
and different books sometimes have almost identical ones. Even the author's
name on the manuscripts varies greatly.[25] Comparing the lists in the manu-
script catalogues and in the biblio-biographies of al-Bursī, I have made the fol-
lowing, doubtless provisional, (alphabetical) list:

a)   (*Kitāb*) *al-Alfayn fī waṣf sādat al-kawnayn*, of which one manuscript is
       said to exist.[26]

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21   Al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 9/2, p. 660; vol. 14, p. 65; vol. 21, p. 141. H. Corbin cites this
       author many times – he calls him al-Ḥasan al-Khaṭīb al-Qāriʾ al-Mashhadī – and his work,
       which is still in manuscript form (seminars of the EPHE in *Itinéraire d'un enseignement*,
       years 1968-1969 and 1969-1970 and *En Islam iranien*, vol. 4, p. 212).

22   *Al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 7, p. 233. The same al-Ṭihrānī points to a *qaṣīda* of a certain Sinjārī in
       praise of the *Mashāriq* of al-Bursī (*al-Dahrīʿa*, vol. 9/2, p. 472).

23   *Fihrist-e nusakh-e khaṭṭī-ye … ketābkhāne-ye mellī*, vol. 9, p. 496; *Fihrist … ketābkhāne-ye
       āyatollāh Marʿashī*, vol. 16, p. 159.

24   Except maybe for a treatise in Persian attributed to al-Bursī and entitled *Risālat al-Lamʿa*
       or *Lamʿa-ye kāshif* (notably on the subject of the esoteric secrets of the divine Names and
       letters); see *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 18, p. 354 and Kaḥḥāla, ʿUmar Riḍā, *Muʿjam al-muʾallifīn*, vol. 4,
       p. 153.

25   On this issue, the hesitations of the great German scholar Carl Brockelmann in his famous
       Geschichte der arabischen Literatur are significant. The name of our author is given there
       under three different forms: Bursī (*GAL, suppl. 2*, p. 204), Birsī (*GAL, suppl. 3/2*, p. 1266)
       and Brussawī (*GAL, suppl. 2*, p. 660).

26   Al-Majlisī had at his disposal a copy of this work (*Biḥār*, vol. 1, p. 10); see also al-Ṭihrānī,
       al-Dharīʿā, vol. 2, p. 299 and *GAL, suppl. 2*, p. 204.

b) *Al-Durr al-thamīn*: this Quranic commentary specifically on the figure of
     ʿAlī is the subject of the present study. I shall return to it later.

c) *Lawāmiʿ anwār al-tamjīd wa jawāmiʿ asrār al-tawḥīd (fī uṣūl al-ʿaqāʾid)*;
     described by its author as an introduction to the *Mashāriq*, this writing is
     published in almost all the editions of it. It contains a digest of the theo-
     logical and mystical doctrines of the author.[27]

d) *Mashāriq al-amān wa lubāb ḥaqāʾiq al-īmān*: Its content is close to that of
     the *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn*. It contains esoteric commentaries of vary-
     ing lengths on a number of important themes of Shiʿism, ranging from
     the 'science of letters' to Quranic and Hadith commentaries and includes
     all kinds of eschatological, theological and magical subjects. A recent edi-
     tion of the work was published in Lebanon.[28]

e) *Tafsīr sūrat al-ikhlāṣ/al-tawḥīd*, a philosophical commentary of Surah 112
     of the Quran, it has no specifically Shiʿi characteristics. It has been pub-
     lished twice in Iran.[29]

f) *(Risāla fī) Ziyārat (li-) amīr al-muʾuminīn*, is manifestly a document about
     the visit of the tomb of ʿAlī and the prayers suitable for recital there
     (indeed, the term *ziyāra* has two meanings: a pilgrimage to the tomb
     of a saint; and the prayers performed during the visit). Afandī/Efendī
     al-Jīrānī, who apparently held it in his hands, says that it is very long and
     is celebrated for its beauties and subtleties.[30]

   – A certain number of poems are attributed to al-Bursī. They all concern
      different aspects of the sainthood of members of the Family of the
      Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*), notably ʿAlī, and reflect the author's real devo-
      tion to them. The poems have been published at the end of most edi-
      tions of the *Mashāriq*.[31]

27 On the link between this text and the *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn*, see Kantūrī, *Kashf
    al-ḥujub*, p. 481 and *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 18, p. 362. In the edition that I consulted (Beirut, 1379),
    the work is on pages 5 to 13.

28 By ʿAbd al-Rasūl Zayn al-Dīn, Beirut, 1430/2009. According to Afandī/Efendī, is it one
    of the last works of al-Bursī, *Riyāḍ al-ʿulamāʾ*, vol. 2, p. 305; cf. Kantūrī, *Kashf al-ḥujub*,
    p. 521. It is not known why, despite the existence of many manuscripts of the work (see
    al-Dahrīʿa, vol. 21, p. 33; *Fihrist … Marʿashī*, vol. 5, p. 163) the edition was edited from a
    single very late manuscript.

29 Respectively by Ḥasan Ḥasanzādeh Āmolī, *Waḥdat az dīdgāh-e ʿārif va ḥakīm*, Tehran,
    1362 solar/1984, "Annex", pp. 212-225; and by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Derāyatī, in the review
    Āfāq-e nūr 2 (Pāyīz va zemestān-e 1384 solar [= autumn-winter 2006], pp. 25-34 (the sec-
    ond editor apparently ignores the first edition)). None of the editions is a critical one. For
    the references to the works of Bursī, see final bibliography.

30 *Riyāḍ al-ulamāʾ*, vol. 2, p. 310 et 342 and vol. 12, p. 78.

31 *Mashāriq*, pp. 225-247; see also al-Daylamī, *Irshād al-qulūb*, p. 446; al-Qummī, al-Shaykh
    ʿAbbās, *al-Kunā wa l-alqāb*, vol. 2, p. 306 (the *takhmīs* of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Aḥsāʾī on a

– Other writings, of which we know nothing, are mentioned by the sources; it is not known if they even exist in manuscript (the multiple variants of the titles are not indicated here): *Asrār al-nabī wa Fāṭima wa l-aʾimma, Faḍāʾil amīr al-muʾminīn, Mawlid al-nabī wa ʿAlī wa Fāṭima, Risāla fī kayfiyyat al-tawḥīd wa l-ṣalāt ʿalā l-rasūl wa l-aʾimma, Risāla fī l-ṣalawāt ʿalā l-nabī wa ālihi l-maʿṣūmīn, al-Risāla al-mukhtaṣara fī l-tawḥīd* (are the last three identical?).[32]

Returning now to the Quranic commentary attributed to Rajab al-Bursī and best known by the title: *al-Durr al-thamīn fī khams miʾa āyat nazalat fī amīr al-muʾminīn*, 'The Precious Pearl regarding the 500 Quranic Verses revealed regarding the Commander of the Faithful [i.e. ʿAlī].'[33] It was edited (not in the form of a 'critical edition') by ʿAlī ʿĀshūr in Beirut in 1424/2003.[34] Is this an independent work, as ʿĀshūr seems to imply, according to several early bio-bibliographers? Or is it, as ʿAbdallāh Afandī/Efendī al-Jīrānī and Āghā Bozorg al-Ṭihrānī declare, a summary of al-Bursī's Quranic commentaries in his *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn*, as edited by a certain Taqī al-Dīn ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥalabī? It is true that the edited text, although far from identical to the corresponding parts of the *Mashāriq*, has obvious similarities with them. But the same type of remark can be said of the parallels and similarities between the *Mashāriq al-amān* and the *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn*. If we accept this data, it is possible to surmise, that al-Bursī (or someone using of his ideas?) wrote several more or less similar works.

The number 500 of the title seems symbolic, given that, however one counts the verses in it, 500 is never reached. The chapters of the book consider 35 surahs out of the 114 of the Quran, with the repetition of three among them, namely

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poem of al-Bursī); al-Amīnī, *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 7, p. 33 *ff.*; Khāqānī, *Shuʿarāʾ al-Ḥilla*, vol. 2, pp. 371-379.

32 See for example *Riyāḍ al-ulamāʾ*, vol. 2, pp. 305, 307-308; al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Amal al-āmil*, vol. 2, p. 117; *Fihrist … Āstān-e Quds*, vol. 11, p. 682.

33 The most frequent variants: *al-Durr al-thamīn fī dhikr khams miʾa āyat nazalat fī mawlānā amīr al-muʾminīn* (*bi-ʾittifāq akthar al-mufassirīn min ahl al-dīn*) and *al-Durr al-thamīn fī asrār al-anzaʿ al-baṭīn*; see for example Afandī/Efendī, *Riyāḍ*, vol. 2, p. 306; al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 8, p. 64. About *al-anzaʿ al-baṭīn* ("the fat bellied bald one") as qualifiers of ʿAlī see N. Ṭāʾī, *Shamāʾil-e amīr al-muʾminīn*, Persian translation by F. Ardalān, Tehran, 1393 solar/2014. pp. 36-37 and 53 *ff.* (an apologetical work based however on a great number of sources, some of them being very early ones).

34 This work is on pages 19-219 of that volume and is followed (pp. 224-317) by the reproduction of a chapter of the *Uṣūl min al-Kāfī* of al-Kulaynī concerning the mention of ʿAlī and other members of the Family of Muḥammad as well as that of their *walāya* in the Quran ("Bāb fīhⁱ nukat wa nutaf min al-tanzīl fī l-walāya"; French translation in M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *La Preuve de Dieu*, pp. 265 *ff.*). The issue obviously touches upon the Shiʿi issue of the "integral original Quran" and the falsified version of the ʿUthmānian Vulgate (see chap. 1 of the present volume).

al-Kahf (surah 18), al-Nūr (surah 24) and al-Furqān (surah 25). But within each chapter, many verses of other surahs are used to confirm the arguments of the author. The purpose of the book is to reveal what al-Bursī believes to be explicit references, presumed allusions and hidden meanings in these verses concerning ʿAlī, his relationship to Muḥammad, the members of his family, his followers or his enemies.

Despite its somewhat resembling a notebook, *al-Durr al-thamīn* provides us with a typical example of a category of interpretative work which is particularly important in Shiʿism and which I have elsewhere called 'personalized commentaries'.[35] Before translating some passages and briefly commenting on them, I will try to define to what type of literary genre it belongs.

The birth and development of this genre of Quranic commentary in Shiʿism appears to be intimately linked to early Shiʿi doctrines about the succession of the Prophet and its major consequences, in this case the falsification (*taḥrīf*) of the official version of the Quran known as the 'Uthmānian Vulgate'. According to those doctrines, after the death of the Prophet (traditionally in the year 11/632) and in execution of a plan prepared long in advance, his enemies seized power, lad principally by the Umayyad clan. After their crushing defeat by Muḥammad at the battle of Badr (2/624), they had converted to Islam, out of a mixture of compulsion and cynical opportunism. But immediately after his death, in a veritable 'coup d'état' they imposed Abū Bakr as his successor to the caliphate, and after him ʿUmar, violently removing from power the sole legitimate heir of the Prophet, ʿAlī, and killing members of the prophetic Holy Family (*ahl al-bayt*), notably Fāṭima, daughter of Muḥammad and ʿAlī's wife. The first consequences of this plot were the creation of a falsified version of the Quran and its imposition on the entire community of believers. The Quran it replaced, its supposedly original version, three times the volume of the new, official state Quran, was said to have declared ʿAli, explicitly or allusively, to be Muhammad's divinely appointed successor, and to have named the other members of the prophetic Family and their real friends and their real enemies. Now these enemies were in power and one of their first tasks would inevitably be to delete or alter compromising passages of the Holy Book. That is what they did, and in doing so made many passages of the sacred text barely intelligible.[36]

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35 M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Le *Tafsīr* d'al-Ḥibarī (m. 286/899). Exégèse coranique et ésotérisme Shiʿite", *Journal des savants* 2009/1 (janvier-juin 2009), pp. 3-23 (included and developed in *le Coran silencieux*, chap. 3; English translation in F. Daftary & G. Miskinzoda (eds.), *The Study of Shiʿi Islam: History,Theology and Law*, London, 2014, Part II, chap. 5, pp. 113-134).

36 On these subjects, see now E. Kohlberg & M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and falsification* et M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux, passim.*

"The Quran has been revealed in four parts (*arbaʿat arbāʿ*): one quarter concerns us [we, the people of the prophetic Family], another quarter deals with our adversaries, a third quarter with what is licit and illicit and a last one with duties and precepts."[37]

"Nobody is equal to ʿAlī in the Book of God as to what has been revealed in his honour."[38]

"Seventy verses have been revealed exclusively about ʿAlī to which none else can be associated."[39]

According to many traditions, the original Quran explicitly contained the names of dozens of eminent members of the tribe of Quraysh, as well as the names of their fathers, declared to be enemies of Muḥammad.[40]

It was precisely these verses or their center of gravity, the precise names of the historical figures which had been revealed in them, that were censored by the caliphs and their men, giving the Quran its fragmentary, often hardly intelligible, nature: "If the Quran had been left as it had been revealed, imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) is reputed to have said, one would have found our names [we, the people of the prophetic Family] as are mentioned the name of those who came before us [i.e. the holy figures of the former religions]."[41] The same imam is also said to have declared: "If the Quran could be read as it had been revealed, not even two people would have differed about it."[42]

Shiʿi works, those of the Twelvers in particular and notably the early hadith compilations, starting with the monograph of al-Sayyārī (first half of the 3rd/9th c.) on the issue of falsification, indeed contain many records where passages of the Quran are quoted which contain the names of historical figures who were contemporaries of the Prophet, notably ʿAlī (passages which are absent from the 'official' Quran today).[43]

The interdependence between the prophetic Family and the Quran is clearly expressed in the famous tradition of the "Two Precious Objects" (*ḥadīth*

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37   Tradition often attributed to ʿAlī but also to the Prophet; voir al-Ḥibarī, *Tafsīr*, tradition
      n° 2, p. 233; Furāt al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr*, pp. 45 *ff.*; al-Ḥakim al-Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*, vol. 1,
      pp. 40 *ff.*, n°s 57 *ff.*

38   Tradition attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās; al-Ḥakim al-Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid*, vol. 1, pp. 39 *ff.*

39   Tradition going back to Mujāhid; *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 43.

40   See for example al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, kitāb faḍl al-Qurʾān, bāb al-nawādir, vol. 4,
      pp. 440-441, n° 3570; al-Nuʿmānī, *Kitāb al-ghayba*, chap. 21, n° 5, p. 452.

41   Al-Sayyārī, *Kitāb al-qirāʾāt*, ed. E. Kohlberg-M.A. Amir Moezzi (see footnote 36), tradition
      n° 9, Arabic text, p. 8; for other sources, see commentaries, English text, p. 59.

42   *Ibid.*, tradition n° 8 and English text, p. 58.

43   See studies cited in footnote 36; also M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 200-227;
      M.M. Bar-Asher, "Variant Readings and Additions of the Imāmī-Shīʿa to the Quran", *Israel
      Oriental Studies* 13 (1993), pp. 39-74; here, chap. 1.

al-thaqalayn), attributed to Muḥammad, in which he in effect says that he is leaving to his community two inseparable "precious objects", his Family and the Book of God.[44] For the Shiʿis, the treason committed by the adversaries of Muḥammad, who usurped the rights of ʿAlī, Fāṭima and their descendants, lay precisely in their breaking the bond uniting the two, thus disfiguring the mission of the Prophet. They effectively assaulted the prophetic Family and falsified the divine Book. In a tradition going back to the Prophet and recorded by the Shiʿis, he warns his community: "… You will be answerable for what you inflict upon the Two Precious Objects which I am bequeathing to you, the Book of God and my Family. Take heed, do not say 'we have altered and falsified it' (*ghayyarnā wa ḥarrafnā*), and of my Family, do not say 'we have abandoned it and killed it.'"[45]

In a letter attributed to imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799) and addressed to a disciple, one reads: "Do not seek to embrace the faith of those who do not follow us [literally: "those who are not Shiʿis"], do not love their religion, for they are traitors who have betrayed God and His Messenger by betraying their Deposits (*amānāt*). Do you know how they betrayed the Deposits? The Book of God had been entrusted to them and they falsified it and altered it. Their real leaders [i.e. ʿAlī and his descendants] had been appointed for them, but they turned away from them."[46] As has been said above, according to the first Shiʿi writings, the main things deleted from the Quran were mostly names of people, notably those of the members of the Family of the Prophet and their enemies; a falsification that has made the Quran in places unintelligible. Hence the need for interpretation and hermeneutics. The forgery has made of the Quran 'a silent book' or guide (*kitāb/imām ṣāmit*). Its Word, its meaning, is restored by the imam and his teachings, and for this reason he is called 'the speaking Quran' (*kitāb/Qurʾān nāṭiq*).[47] From its earliest origins, Shiʿism has defined itself as a hermeneutical religion, whose purpose is to reveal the hidden meaning of the Quran. The imam is thus entitled the "master" or "warrior of spiritual exegesis" (*ṣāḥib/muqātil/ mujāhid al-taʾwīl*).[48] That is why one

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44   On this hadith, its variants and its sources, see now the anonymous collective work *Kitāb allāh wa ahl al-bayt fī ḥadīth al-thaqalayn*; aslo M.M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shiism*, Leiden, 1999, pp. 93-98.

45   Ibn Bābūya al-Ṣadūq, *Amālī* (or *Majālis*), "majlis" 47, nº 9, p. 280.

46   Al-Kulaynī, *al-Rawḍa min al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 181.

47   M. Ayoub, "The Speaking Qurʾān and the Silent Qurʾān: a Study of the Principles and Development of Imāmī Tafsīr", in A. Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, Oxford, 1988, pp. 177-198; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux, passim*.

48   Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, pp. 104 *ff*; Id., "Le combatant du *taʾwīl*. Un poème de Mullā Ṣadrā sur ʿAlī", *La Religion discrète*, chap. 9.

of the earliest forms of Quranic Shiʿi interpretation is the duty of identifying those deleted names.[49] Thus, the 'personalized commentary', perhaps the earliest mode of Shiʿi Quranic exegesis, is that which reveals the hidden meaning of the Quran, lost at the time of its falsification, its true spirit hidden by the distortion of the text, by identifying the persons about whom the Word was revealed. For a number of Shiʿi currents, especially the one which will culminate in Twelver Shiʿism, the importance of the people and their roles in History are the central focus of the faith; this could not therefore be explicitly present in the text of Revelation. In a letter addressed by the sixth imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq to his disciple al-Mufaḍḍal al-Juʿfī, the imam insists heavily on the fact that real faith, true religion, lies in knowing the names of individual people (*inna al-dīn huwa maʿrifat al-rijāl*), that the knowledge of these individuals is the religion of God (*maʿrifat al-rijāl dīn allāh*), and that these individuals are the Friends of God, above all the Prophet, ʿAlī, the imams descended from him and their followers, on the one hand, and the Enemies of God who are the enemies of the imams and their followers, on the other. Consequently the basis of the faith lies in recognizing the Allies of God and their adversaries, who are also the adversaries of God.[50] Among the figures thus identified, ʿAlī receives by far the lion's share. I shall return to this.

The "personalized commentary" is also found in non-Shiʿi authors, but far less frequently, and with them it is more especially concerned with the "circumstances of revelation" (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). But it becomes very early on a literary genre particularly valued in Shiʿism. Here are some examples, in chronological order:

In the 3rd/9th century: *Mā nazala min al-Qurʾān fī amīr al-muʾminīn* by Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Thaqafī (d. 283/896), author of the famous *Kitāb al-ghārāt*;[51] the *Tafsīr* by al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥakam al-Ḥibarī (d. 286/899).[52]

In the 4th/10th century: the *Tafsīr* of Furāt al-Kūfī (d. around 300/912), disciple of al-Ḥibarī;[53] *Kitāb al-tanzīl fī l-naṣṣ ʿalā amīr al-muʾminīn* (also known under other titles) of Ibn Abī al-Thalj (d. 322/934 or 325/936-937);[54] *Asmāʾ amīr*

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49   It seems that it is later on that the Quran came to be considered to be a text with multiple levels whose hidden meaning(s) would be revealed through the hermeneutics of the imam; see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *ibid.* and the next chapter and the present chapter, part 4.

50   Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, section 10, chap. 21, pp. 526 *ff.*; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Les Imams et les Ghuāt", pp. 15 *ff.*

51   Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, p. 12; al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, vol. 19, p. 28. The work seems now lost; generally, when an edition of a text is not mentioned that would be the case.

52   See above, footnote 37.

53   See also above footnote 37.

54   E. Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work. Ibn Ṭāwūs and his Library*, Leiden, 1992, p. 355, n° 594.

al-muʾminīn min al-Qurʾān of Ibn Shammūn Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Kātib (d. around 330/941-942);[55] *Mā nazala fī l-khamsa* ("What has been revealed regarding the Five" – i.e. the Five of the Mantel: Muḥammad, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn) and *Mā nazala fī ʿAlī min al-Qurʾān* of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Jalūdī al-Baṣrī (d. 332/944);[56] *Taʾwīl mā nazala min al-Qurʾān fī ahl al-bayt* (with some variations in its title) of Muḥammad b. al-ʿAbbās al-Bazzāz, also known as Ibn al-Juḥām (flourishing in 328/939-940);[57] *Mā nazala min al-Qurʾān fī ṣāḥib al-zamān* ("What has been revealed in the Quran regarding the Master of Time" – i.e. the Mahdi; another title with variations) of Ibn ʿAyyāsh al-Jawharī (d. 401/1010), author of *Muqtaḍab al-athar*.[58]

In the 5th/11th century: *Āy al-Qurʾān al-munazzala fī amīr al-muʾminīn ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib* of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022);[59] two books of al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī (d. after 470/1077-1078), namely *Khaṣāʾiṣ amīr al-muʾminīn fī l-Qurʾān*[60] and *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*.[61]

In the 6th/12th century: *Nuzūl al-Qurʾān fī shaʾn amīr al-muʾminīn* of Muḥammad b. Muʾmin al-Shīrāzī (precise dates unknown);[62] *Khaṣāʾiṣ al-waḥy al-mubīn fī manāqib amīr al-muʾminīn* of Ibn al-Biṭrīq al-Ḥillī (d. 600/1203-1204).[63]

In the 8th/14th century: the work we are examining here: *al-Durr al-thamīn fī khams miʾa āya nazalat fī amīr al-muʾminīn* of al-Bursī.

In the 10th/16th century: *Taʾwīl al-āyāt al-ẓāhira fī faḍāʾil al-ʿitra al-ṭāhira* of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Astarābādī.[64]

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55   Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, p. 52; al-Ṭihrānī, *Dharīʿa*, vol. 2, p. 65.

56   Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, p. 180; al-Ṭihrānī, *Dharīʿa*, vol. 19, p. 28 and 30.

57   E. Kohlberg, *op.cit.*, pp. 369-371, nº 623. Of this work, only fragments in later sources remain. These fragments have now been now collected in Ibn al-Juḥām, *Taʾwīl mā nazala min al-Qurʾān al-karīm fī l-nabī wa ālih*.

58   Al-Najāshī, *Rijāl*, p. 67; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Maʿālim al-ʿulamāʾ*, p. 20; al-Ṭihrānī, *Dharīʿa*, vol. 19, p. 30.

59   Kohlberg, *op.cit.*, p. 132, nº 83. On the position of al-Mufīd on the issue of the falsification, see now M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Al-Shaykh al-Mufîd (m. 413/1022) et la question de la falsification du Coran", in D. De Smet & M.A. Amir-Moezzi (eds.), *Controverses*, pp. 199-229 (also published in *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, nuova serie, vol. 87, fas. 1-4 (2014), pp. 155-176).

60   Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Maʿālim al-ʿulamāʾ*, p. 78. The doctrinal affiliation of al-Ḥaskānī is not certain. He seems to have been a Sunni Ḥanafite with strong Shiʾi sympathies, or even more likely a crypto-Shiʾi practising *taqiyya* (the duty of keeping the secret); voir E. Kohlberg, *op.cit.*, pp. 150-151.

61   E. Kohlberg, *op.cit.*, pp. 330-331, nº542.

62   *Ibid.*, p. 307, nº 488.

63   Ed. M.B. al-Maḥmūdī, Tehran, 1406/1986.

64   Ed. Ḥ. al-Ustād Walī, Qumm, 1417/1996.

At the turn of the 11th/17th and 12th/18th centuries: two works by Hāshim b. Sulaymān al-Baḥrānī, *al-Lawāmiʿ al-nūrāniyya fī asmāʾ amīr al-muʾminīn al-Qurʾāniyya*[65] and *al-Maḥajja fī mā nazala fī l-qāʾim l-ḥujja* ("The broad path towards what has been revealed regarding the Qāʾim the Proof" – i.e. the eschatological Savior).[66]

In the 13th/19th century: *al-Āyāt al-nāzila fī dhamm al-jāʾirīn ʿalā ahl al-bayt* ("The verses revealed to denounce those are unjust towards the prophetic Family") of Ḥaydar ʿAlī al-Shīrwānī,[67] or also *al-Naṣṣ al-jalī fī arbaʿīn āya fī shaʾn ʿAlī* of al-Ḥusayn b. Bāqir al-Burūjirdī.[68] Note also that the writing of this type of work continues to this day in Shiʿi circles, especially among Twelvers.[69]

3   Annotated Extracts from *al-Durr al-thamīn*

As we shall see in the examples below, the author of *al-Durr al-thamīn*, loyal to a long tradition of 'personalised commentaries', populates the Quranic text with different characters, often said to have been deleted by the falsifiers of the text of the Revelation, who have completely modified the pattern of the narrative and hence its meaning.

Quran 1 (al-Fātiḥa): the *Basmala* (that is the formula "*In the Name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate*"):

> ... It is a reminder (*dhikr*) from God the Unique One that comprises 19 letters, that is, the total of the letters of the Five Silhouettes (*al-ashbāḥ al-khamsa*) that God inscribed with light, with his right hand of might, in the World of Light before the creation of the years and the centuries ...

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65   Published in Qumm, 1394/1974-1975.

66   Ed. M.M. al-Mīlānī, Beirut, 1413/1992.

67   Al-Ṭihrānī, *Dharīʿa*, vol.1, p. 48.

68   *Ibid.*, vol. 24, p. 172. This work was published in Tehran, 1320/1902-1903 (not seen). Note that Sunni authors with Shiʿi sympathies have also composed this type of work although of course to a much less. Let us mention the examples of the pro-mystic Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī (m. 430/1038) in his *Mā nazala min al-Qurʾān fī amīr al-muʾminīn* (*Dharīʿa*, vol. 19, p. 28; the fragments of this work, recorded by other sources, have been edited by M.B. al-Maḥmūdī in *al-Nūr al-mushtaʿal al-muqtabas min kitāb Mā nazala min al-Qurʾān fī amīr al-muʾminīn*, Tehran, 1406/1985.); Ibn al-Faḥḥām al-Nīsābūrī (d. 458/ 1066), author of *al-Āyāt al-nāzila fī ahl al-bayt* (Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mīzān*, Beirut, 1407-8/1987-88, vol. 2, p. 251) or also al-Ḥākim al-Jushamī al-Bayhaqī (d. 494/1100-1101), with Muʿtazilite leanings, in his *Tanbīh al-ghāfilīn* (Cairo, n.d.).

69   See for example the monumental work in Persian by the religious scholar M. Ḥusaynī Bahārānčī, *Āyāt al-faḍāʾil yā faḍāʾil-e ʿAlī dar Qurʾān*, Qumm, 1380 solar/2002.

> They are the origin of the Creation and its end; the secret of being and its deepest meaning.[70]

The "Five Silhouttes" are pre-existential metaphysical entities, the Five Impeccables (*maʿṣūm*), the People of the Mantle (*ahl al-kisāʾ*), namely Muḥammad, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn who have a total of 19 letters (i.e. consonants) in their names (M, Ḥ, M, D, ʿ, L, Y, F, Alif, Ṭ, M, H, Ḥ, S, N, Ḥ, S, Y, N), the same number as that of the letters of the *basmala*, that is, the formula *bi-ʾsmi llāhⁱ (al-)raḥmānⁱ (al-)raḥīm*. According to the science of letters, particularly valued by al-Bursī, the letters that make up the name (*ism*) contain the essence of the reality of the named (*musammā*). This means that just as the *basmala* opens 'the world' that is the Quran, it is through the Five Impeccables that Being is opened. They are the alpha and omega as well as the ultimate meaning of creation. The chapter continues with hadiths which tell of the pre-existence of the luminous entities of Muḥammad and ʿAlī, which are "externally human and internally divine" (*ẓāhiruhumā bashariyya wa bāṭinuhumā lāhūtiyya*). They have been manifested in human bodies/temples (*hayākil nāsūtiyya*) so that men may to be able to bear the sight of them, for they have the rank of the Lord of the Two Worlds (*fa-humā maqāmay rabb al-ʿālamayn*) and they are the veils of the Creator of beings (*ḥijābay khāliq al-khalāʾiq*). Thus, the Impeccables, and most singularly Muḥammad and ʿAlī, are the loci of manifestation of God, the first one represents the exoteric dimension and the second one the esoteric dimension of the divine theophany.[71]

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70   *Al-Durr al-thamīn*, I have used the edition of ʿĀshūr (from now on *Dth*), pp. 22-23. In my presentation the Quranic text is in Italics and the commentaries from *Dth* in Roman and smaller characters. Moreover, I have given not identified the passages parallel to the texts translated from *Dth* in the *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn* and the *Mashāriq al-amān*. They are far too numerous and dispersed throughout those works, with more or less important variants.

71   *Dth*, pp. 23-24. The reading ʿ*ālamayn* (the two Worlds, that is, this world and the afterworld; the visible world – ʿ*ālam al-shahāda* – and the invisible world – ʿ*ālam al-ghayb*) instead of the more usual reading of ʿ*ālamīn* (the Worlds) corresponds better, it seems to me, to the couple Muḥammad/ʿAlī which occupies the centre of the tradition and which explains, besides, the use of other duals in the text. Furthermore, note that the chains of transmission of the traditions are not shown; however, cross referencing with other sources clearly shows that in almost all cases we are dealing with Shiʿi traditions going back to the imams and often recorded in numerous hadith compilations. On the pre-existential entities of the Impeccables and the metaphysical Worlds before this world, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, partie II ("La pré-existence de l'Imam"), especially pp. 73-111; Id., "Worlds and Their Inhabitants. Some Notes on Imami-Shiʿi Cosmo-Anthropogony", in Elisa Coda et Cecilia Martini Bonadeo (eds.), *De l'Antiquité tardive au Moyen-Âge*, pp. 519-529. On the pre-existential Lights of Muḥammad and ʿAlī, see U. Rubin, "Pre-existence and Light:

Quran 1 (al-Fātiḥa), verse 6: "'*Guide us unto the right Path*': God made ʿAlī the right Path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) about which people fell into divergence. ʿAlī is the explicit Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*; a recurring Quranic expression) and the Religion of God (*dīn allāh*) outside of which nothing is accepted by the servants."[72]

Quran 1 (al-Fātiḥa), verse 7: "'*The Way of those upon whom You have bestowed favour*', that is, the servants of Muhammad. '*Not of those who have earned Your anger or those who are astray*': this wise sentence has two meanings. According to the exoteric meaning [recorded by the exegetes], the first phrase refers to the Jews and the second refers to the Christians; but the esoteric meaning concerns those in the Shiʿi community who take the approach of the Jews and of the Christians ... As the Messenger of God said regarding ʿAlī: 'You will be at the centre of conflicts for there is in you something similar to Jesus. The Jews dislike Jesus to the point of slandering his mother and the Christians exaggerate regarding him to the point of taking him for God ...'. The targets of the anger of God in this community are those who have turned away from the love (*ḥubb*) of ʿAlī; they are the 'metamorphosed' of this community (*musūkh hādhihi l-umma*) and those gone astray are those who exaggerate in their love of ʿAlī (*al-mufriṭūn*)."[73]

The author provides the readers with a veritable interpretative key for the passages of the Quran which speak negatively about Jews and Christians. These two terms are just symbols, in the etymological sense of the term, that is, identifying signs for particular groups of Muslims: the "Sunnis" vehemently hostile to ʿAlī and his family, the *nāṣibī*, pl. *nawāṣib*, and the exaggerating, extremist Shiʿis, the *ghālⁱⁿ*, pl. *ghulāt*.

Aspects of the Concept of Nūr Muḥammad", *ıos* 5 (1975), pp. 62-119; Id., "Prophets and Progenitors in Early Shiʿa Tradition", *JSAI* 1 (1979), pp. 41-46.

72 *Dth*, p. 28. Cf. ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 57; see also P. Lory, "Souffrir pour la vérité ...", p. 318. ʿAlī is the Way, the Path and the Truth to which this path leads, namely the true religion of God. The "Christic" resonance of these words is to be stressed.

73 *Dth*, pp. 29-30; see also P. Lory, "Souffrir pour la vérité ...", p. 318. On these points see also al-Sayyārī, *K. al-Qirāʾāt*, nº 33, p. 14 (Arabic texte) et p. 69 (English text) for other sources; Furāt, *Tafsīr*, p. 51, nº 10; al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 22, nº 17. On the "metamorphosed one", that is, the enemies of the prophetic Family transformed, either before or after their death, into ignoble and malevolent beasts, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, index *sub maskh*. On the notions of metempsychosis and reincarnation in Islam, see G. Monnot, "La transmigration et l'immortalité", *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales* 14 (1980), pp. 149-166 (included in Id., *Islam et religions*, Paris, 1986, chap. XII).; R. Freitag, *Seelenwanderung in der islamischen Häresie*, Berlin, 1985, pp. 128-159; U. Rubin, "Apes, Pigs and the Islamic Identity", *ıos* 17 (1997), pp. 89-105; S. Schmidtke, "The Doctrine of the Transmigration of the Soul according to Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (killed 587/1191) and his Followers", *Studia Iranica* 28.2 (1999), pp. 237-254.

Coran 11 (al-Baqara), versets 1-4: "'... *This Book, no doubt stains it*': the Book (*kitāb*) is ʿAlī, exoterically and esoterically.[74] '... *is a guide for the pious*': this means that for the people of the *walāya*, the true piety is the love for ʿAlī.[75] '... *who believe in the Unseen*': the Unseen here means three things: the advent of the Resurrector (*al-qāʾim*), the Day of Resurrection and the Day of the Return (*yawm al-rajʿa*).[76] '... *and establish prayer*': true prayer is love for the Impeccables; the rest is mere metaphor. For a prayer performed without their love and their remembrance is neither recorded nor accepted. Prayer is love for them.[77] '... *and spend out of what We have provided for them*': the real gift is the teaching of the initiates on the virtues of the Progeny of Muḥammad, [i.e. the imams] (*taʿlīm al-muʾminīn faḍāʾil āl Muḥammad*) and the presentation of their qualities.[78] '... *and who believe in what has been revealed to you and what has been revealed before you*': this means what has been revealed regarding ʿAlī and the meaning of ʿAlī (*fī ʿAlī wa fī maʿnāhᵘ*)."[79]

This entire sequence insists strongly on the fact that without the love of the Friends or Allies of God, of the men and women who manifest the Names and Attributes of God on earth and fulfill the divine will, without their *walāya*, there is no real religion. Furthermore, as the supreme symbol of the *walāya*, the Divine Man, the deification of the Perfect Man or the humanization of God, ʿAlī constitutes the center of gravity, the ultimate meaning and objective of all revelations.

Quran 11 (al-Baqara), verses 138 and 22. "'*An anointing from God. Who can anoint better than God?*': Abū ʿAbdallāh [i.e. imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq] has declared: '(the anointing) designates our *walāya* and love towards us [i.e. the Impeccables]. This is the light of the initiate in this world and the next'[80] ... God has

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74   *Dth*, pp. 32 *sqq*. Aussi al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 59-60; al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 26, nº 1; al-Ḥaskānī, *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*, vol. 1, p. 86, nº 106. On the application of the term *kitāb* à l'Homme Parfait, voir al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Ṣāfī fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, pp. 92 *sq*. In numerous other passages of *Dth*, ʿAlī is identified with the Quran *kitāb*.

75   Al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 26, nº 1; Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl al-dīn*, p. 18 et 340.

76   Cf. al-Astarābādī, *Taʾwīl al-āyāt al-ẓāhira*, p. 33, nº 1; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 24, p. 352, nº 69. On the Shiʿi eschatological notion of *rajʿa* (return to life of a certain number of people before the universal Resurrection), see E. Kohlberg, *EI2* et M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, *s.v.*

77   On the necessity of love/*walāya* in the performance of canonical duties by the faithful and their acceptance by God, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Notes à propos de la *walāya* imamite", *JAOS* 122.4 (2002), pp. 722-741, 2nd part: "Question des Piliers de l'islam", pp. 726-728 (= *La Religion discrète*, chap. 7, pp. 183-186).

78   On the precise Shiʿi technical meaning of the terms *ʿilm/taʿlīm* and *īmān/ muʾmin*, see *Guide divin* and *Religion discrète*, index, *s.v.*

79   On the *walāya* and ʿAlī, supreme symbol of the *walāya*, as ultimate objects of the divine revelations, see chap. 1 of the present work.

80   The word *ṣibgha*, twice used in this verse and which I have translated as "anointing" (its literal meaning is rather "tincture"), is a hapax and the understanding of its meaning has causes many problems for both Muslim exegetes as well as modern specialists.

considered those who love ʿAlī as the real monotheist, for He has said: '*Do not attribute any associates to God*'. The associate here means the one who is similar. The one who gives ʿAlī an associate does in fact give God an equal. Now, God has no equal; likewise ʿAlī, as the Ally of God has none similar to him. Woe to those who compare him to Zurayq and Ghudar [i.e. ʿUmar and Abū Bakr]; woe to those who, instead of the Guide of Truth, have chosen Pharao and Hāmān [i.e. Abū Bakr and ʿUmar]."[81]

ʿAlī, the theophanic Ally of God, cannot be compared to anyone else. He is God's and Muḥammad's Chosen One. Those who haveusurped his position and their followers have in fact broken away from the true religion of divine Unity, by removing from the leadership of the community the only real initiate to the religion of Muḥammad and thus his only legitimate successor.[82]

Quran III (Āl ʿImrān), verse 2: "'*There is no God but He, the Living, the Sustainer*': this surah deals with ʿAlī who is the Book and the Veil of God, his supreme Name leading to Him, the mysterious one, his efficient Order, his most noble Symbol, his solemn Announcement, his most grandiose Word."[83]

ʿAlī is here clearly presented in his divine theophanic dimension (*lāhūt*), as a place of manifestation of the Names of God (*maẓhar, majlā*). He is the Book of God, the divine work which guides one to its Author, the Veil which hides and reveals at the same time, the supreme Name, endowed with unlimited powers, leading to the Named One, the divine Order which rules the universe.[84] He is described, as in almost all Shiʿi commentaries, by Quranic expressions such as *al-mathal al-aʿlā* ("the august symbol", Quran 16/al-Naḥl:60), *al-nabaʾ al-ʿaẓīm*

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81   *Dth*, pp. 53-54. On the hadith of Jaʿfar, where ʿAlī is subtly identified with God, see also al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 62, nᵒ 109. The derogatory names of Zurayq, Ghudar and the rebels against God, Pharaoh and his evil advisor Hāmān, refer here to Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, the latter often described to be the manipulator of the former (however the order of the derogative names is not always clear). On these derogative names and others, as applied to the historical enemies of ʿAlī and of the ʿAlids/Shiʿa, and the practice of *sabb al-ṣaḥāba*, ("insulting the Companions of the Prophet"), see I. Goldziher, "Spottnamen der ersten Chalifen bei den Schiʿiten", in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by J. De Somogyi, Hildesheim, 1967-73, vol. 4, pp. 291-305; A.S. Tritton, *Muslim Theology*, pp. 27 *ff*.; A. Arazi, "*Ilqâm al-ḥajar li-man zakkâ sâbb Abî Bakr wa ʿUmar* d'al-Suyûṭî ou le témoignage de l'insulteur des Compagnons", *JSAI* 10 (1987), pp. 211-287; M.M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis*, index *s.v. ṣaḥāba*, "vilification of-"; and the excellent monograph by E. Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī Shīʿī Views on the *ṣaḥāba*", *JSAI* 5 (1984), pp. 143-175 (= *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shīʿism*, Variorum, Aldershot, 1991, article nᵒ 9).

82   Voir aussi *Dth*, pp. 56-57, the commentaries of the verses 208, 211, 256 and 257 of surah II.

83   *Dth*, pp. 59-60: *wa l-murād fī hādhih al-sūra ʿAlī kitābuh wa ḥijābuh wa smuh al-aʿẓam al-marmūz al-maknūz wa amruh al-nāfidh wa mathaluh al-aʿlā wa nabaʾuh al-ʿaẓīm wa kalimatuh al-kubrā.*

84   On the supreme Name of God, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *La Religion discrète*, index *s.v.al-ism al-aʿẓam, al-ism al-akbar*; on the Order, see chap. 6 of the present work.

("the solemn announcement", Quran 78/al-Nabaʾ:2) and finally *al-kalima* ("the Word", numerous occurences) which is often associated with Jesus. These audacious assertions are notably illustrated by a number of sermons attributed to ʿAlī where he declares, in long series of declarations, his identity with God. These sermons remind one of the "paradoxical statements" (*shaṭaḥāt*) of the mystics, which are particularly prized by al-Bursī in his *Mashāriq*.[85]

Quran III (Āl ʿImrān), verse 61: "'... *Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves and let us sincerely invoke God's curse upon the liars* ...': the sons are al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn; by 'women', it is Fāṭima that is designated and by 'ourselves' ʿAlī. It is through them that the Prophet challenged his enemies with an ordeal trial. Now, the sons are the sons of ʿAlī, the woman is that of ʿAlī and the *self*, is ʿAlī himself. It is he who embraces the totality of the verse of the ordeal (*āyat al-mubāhala*). It is through him that God defies His enemies, that He proves the veracity of His Word, that He rectifies what has gone astray in His religion."[86]

For the author, the verse of the Ordeal does not speak so much of all Five of the Mantle, as in the quasi totality of the interpretative Muslim tradition, be it Shiʿi or even Sunni, but rather of ʿAlī. In other words, it is in him that the sacred nature of the entire holy prophetic Family is concentrated.

Quran III (Āl ʿImrān), verse 106: "'*On the Day some faces will be bright while others dark. To the dark face people will be said: "Did you forsake after having believed?"*': 'You have forsaken ʿAlī after having believed in his *walāya* on the day of Ghadīr and after having pledged allegiance to him ...' The Prophet has declared regarding this verse: 'on the Day of Resurrection, my community will come back to life and will come forward under five banners. A first group will come forward under the banner of the Calf (*ʿijl*; an allusion to the biblical Golden Calf included in the Quran with some important differences) of this community [i.e. Abū Bakr or ʿUmar]. I shall ask it: what have you done with the Two Precious Objects (*al-thaqalayn*) that I entrusted you with?' [see above footnote 44 and afferent text] They shall say: 'Regarding the greater Precious Object [i.e. the Quran], we have torn it to pieces and falsified it (*mazzaqnāhᵘ wa ḥarrafnāhᵘ*) and as for the smaller one [i.e. the prophetic Family], we have hated it and made it an enemy' [see above footnote 45 and afferent text]. I shall then reply: 'Move away, leave thirsty [allusion to the thirst that is the characteristic trial on the Day of Resurrection] and with dark faces.'"

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85   See here, chap. 4; T. Lawson, "*The Dawning Places* ...", pp. 269 *ff*.

86   *Dth*, p. 63; cf. al-Ḥibarī, *Tafsīr*, p. 247, nº 12; al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 176 *sq*. On this verse, see P. Ballanfat and M. Yahia, "Ordalie", in M.A. Amir-Moezzi (ed.), *Dictionnaire du Coran*, pp. 618-620; on this notion, see S. Schmucker, "Mubāhala", *EI2*, vol. 7, p. 278.

The dialogue thus continues with the group of followers of the 'Pharaoh of this community', meaning either Abū Bakr or 'Umar, those of the Samaritan (Sāmirī, the corrupter of the Sons of Israel in the Quran 20/Ṭāhā: 85 *ff.*) of the community, meaning either 'Uthmān or Mu'āwiya, and finally those of the Khārijis. They all say that they betrayed the Quran, hated and assassinated the members of the Family of Muḥammad and they are repelled by him, crushed by thirst and their faces blackened. The prophetic hadith ends thus: "Then, will come towards me the people of the banner of the guide of pious, of the seal of Legatees [i.e. the imams of all times], the master of the initiates [*imām al-muttaqīn wa khātim al-waṣiyyīn wa sayyid al-mu'minīn* i.e. 'Alī] and I shall ask them: 'What have you done with the Two Precious Objects I have left with you after me?' They shall reply: 'The greater one [the Quran], we have obeyed it and we have followed it; as for the smaller one [the prophetic Family], we have cherished it and defended it until death'. I shall then tell them: 'Quench your thirst in peace, with shining faces.'"[87]

Quran IV (al-Nisā'), verses 167, 168 and 170: "'*Those who deny and put obstacles in the way of God*': according to Ibn 'Abbās, the Way is 'Alī … '*Those who deny and are unjust regarding the right of the descendants of Muḥammad*': according to Ibn 'Abbās, that is how the verse had been revealed.[88] Then [God] identifies the *walāya* of 'Alī with the Truth. [in the next verse]: '*O mankind! The messenger has come to you with the Truth from your Lord. Believe in it, it is better for you but you disbelieve*': this means believe in the *walāya* of 'Alī."[89]

Quran VI (al-An'ām), verse 160: '*Whoever brings a good deed will receive tenfold the like thereof …*': "The good deed (*al-ḥasana*), is the profession of faith 'no god but God', faith in Muḥammad and love of the prophetic Family (*ḥubb ahl*

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87   *Dth*, pp. 66-68. Cf. al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 109; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 30, pp. 240 *ff.* On the day of Ghadīr or the event of Ghadīr Khumm where, according to the Shi'is, Muḥammad explicitly appointed 'Alī as his successor, see the summa of al-Amīnī 'Abd al-Ḥusayn, *al-Ghadīr*; L. Veccia Vaglieri, "G̲h̲adīr K̲h̲umm", *EI2*; M. Dakake, M. & A. Kazemi Moussavi, "Ġadīr ḫomm: i. in Shi'ite Literature and ii: Ġadīr Festival", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 10, pp. 246-249; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Ghadīr Khumm", *EI3*.

88   *Dth*, p. 74. The expression "this is how this verse has been revealed" (*hākadhā nazalat*) means that it is a different version from that of the official Quran: here indeed the sentence *regarding the rights of the descendants of Muḥammad* (*āl Muḥammad ḥaqqahum*) is an addition to the Vulgate; see also al-Sayyārī, *K. al-Qirā'āt*, n° 138, p. 39 (Arabic text), p. 106 (English text, for other sources). The author of *Dth* cites on numerous occasions the "original Quran" (for example Quran 2: 90, pp. 52-53; Quran 4:65, p. 76). See also Bar-Asher, "Variant Readings and Additions", p. 56.

89   *Dth*, p. 74; in al-Sayyārī, the expression that ends the sequence, namely *fī walāyat 'Alī*, is part of the verse (*op.cit.*, n° 139, p. 39 of the Arabic text; pp. 106-107 of the English text for numerous other sources that record the tradition); Bar-Asher, "Variant Readings and Additions", p. 56.

al-bayt). And the bad action (*al-sayyi'a*), is to deny their *walāya* ... Hence the hadith of the Prophet: 'the love of ʿAlī is a good action that no bad action can alter and the hatred of ʿAlī is a bad action that no good action can redeem.'"[90]

Quran VII (al-Aʿrāf), verse 181: '*And of those whom We created there is a community who guide with the Truth and establish justice there with* ...': "The Messenger of God has declared: 'My community is divided into seventy-three branches of which seventy-two are condemned to the Fire [of Hell]. Only one branch moves towards the Garden [of Paradise] and it is the one composed by you, O ʿAlī, and your followers [literally "your Shiʿis", *shīʿatuka*], for you are never divided from what is true and your followers are never separated from you. Thus they are with what is true.'"[91]

Quran VII (al-Aʿrāf), verse 143: '[*And when Moses came to Our appointed trust and his Lord had spoken unto him, he said:*] "*My Lord! Show me (Thy Self), that I may gaze upon Thee*" ['*Thou wilt not see Me, but gaze upon the mountain! If it stands still in its place, then thou wilt see Me*'.] *And when his Lord revealed (His) glory* [*on the mountain He sent it crashing down*]': "The Quran thus declares that the holy Essence of God (*dhātih al-muqaddasa*) cannot be the object of ocular vision nor be within reach of thoughts. But at the same time the Book speaks of manifestation. Now, there is manifestation when there is form (*hay'a*) and aspect (*mathāl*). Then how can one speak of vision of what cannot be an object of vision? The solution to this riddle is in the use of the word 'Lord' (*rabb*) which can mean different things and whose qualifiers are here implied: what was manifested to Moses on the mountain was the Light (*nūr*) of his Lord, the Greatness (*ʿaẓama*) and the Radiance (*jalāl*) of his Lord. Now, Muḥammad and ʿAlī are the Greatness and the Radiance. It is for this reason that the Commander of the initiates [ʿAlī] said: 'It was I who spoke to Moses from within the bush [literally "the tree", *al-shajara*]. I am that Light that manifested itself to him ...'"[92]

What Moses perceives on the mountain and in the burning bush is not God in his transcendental essence but his immanent Face manifested through the Divine Man whose ultimate symbols are the metaphysical Muḥammad and ʿAlī. We are here at the heart of Shiʿi theology of the figure of the Imam in

90　*Dth*, p. 98; see also Ibn Shādhān, *Miʾat manqaba*, p. 96; al-Qundūzī, *Yanābīʿ al-mawadda*, vol. 2, p. 75; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 108, p. 99.

91　*Dth*, p. 99. According to the author, the Quranic verse, far from speaking of the Sunni Muslim community as a whole, as the "orthodox" exegesis claims, concerns only a minority within it, namely the followers of the divine Alliance (*walāya*) of which ʿAlī is the ideal representation.

92　*Dth*, pp. 102-103.

equilibrium between agnosticism (*taʿṭīl*) and assimilationism (*tashbīh*).[93] The Essence of God (*dhāt*) can only be the object of a negative theology which is ultimately beyond any comprehension, intelligence or perception. This ever-hidden dimension of God is the Unknowable. But if things had remained so, no relationship, no recognition would have been possible between God, for-ever entrenched in his unfathomable abscondity, and all beings abandoned facing a metaphysical void. Theology would then only be a form of agnosticism and faith a vacancy. But God possesses another ontological level, that of the Names and Attributes (*asmāʾ wa ṣifāt*) which, in order to intervene effectively in Being, manifest themselves in theophanic Organs, Hand, Face, Side, Tongue, etc. of God, as described in the Quran. Here God is no longer unknowable, but is an unknown Being who aspires to be known. Now it is precisely for this raison that, far from any assimilationnism making of God a being similar to man, these Organs are said to be metaphors of what manifests in the most radiant way possible what can be revealed in God, that is the Imam in the cos-mic sense, the spiritual Perfect Man, the Guide of Light of whom Muḥammad and even so more ʿAlī are names in the spiritual as well as in the material world. This Guidance of Light, vehicle of the revealed God, which is called, among other things, the *walāya*, is always present on this earth and endures through the ages by incarnating itself in the Allies or Friends of God (*walī*, pl. *awliyāʾ*) or by manifesting itself to them, revealing to them and through them to oth-ers what can be known of God. The imams, or more generally the Friends of God, are men and women who, by their existence and actions, materially prove the existence and intervention of God in the universe. Hence their title "Proof of God" (*ḥujja*, pl. *ḥujaj allāh*). Without them, God is a mere abstraction, the object of merely intellectual speculation or of theoretical spiritualities.

Hence the presence of ʿAlī, lord of the *walāya* and Imam of the imams, in an infinite number of Shiʿi texts, as the supreme locus of manifestation of the divine attributes. He thus is the axis around which the theology of theoph-any turns and which serves as an antidote to what Corbin calls "arithmetical monotheism", the religion of an abstract god, purely speculative, the worship of whom can only be an illusion.[94] Shiʿism wills itself to be the religion of a liv-ing, "concrete" God; a God who intervenes effectively in everyday life, bringing transformation and salvation to those who seeks to know Him. To approach

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93   See on this subject the reflections of H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. 1, "Le shîʿisme duo-décimain", *passim*, and of Ch. Jambet, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie islamique?*, Paris, 2011, Part 3, chapters VI to VIII.

94   H. Corbin, *Le paradoxe du monothéisme*, Paris, 1981 (posthumous work), *passim*. See also the subtle reflections on the subject by S. Ayada, *L'islam des théophanies. Une religion à l'épreuve de l'art*, Paris, 2010, *passim* and especially chapters 2 to 4 of the first part.

his devotees, this God manifests himself in his Friend, in the Imam, with his double dimension, spiritual divine (*lāhūt*) and material human (*nāsūt*).

Someone asked ʿAlī if he could see the God to whom he prayed. He replied: "I would not worship a God I could not see (*mā kunt^u aʿbud rabban lam arah^u*)" to which he then added: "However the eyes of flesh cannot reach Him by their sight. It is the hearts that see Him through the realities of faith."[95] We now know that this Face of God, which manifested itself to Moses, is the Imam, the ʿAlī of Light, who incarnates himself in the earthly divine Friend in order to transform him into a spiritual model and the mystical horizon of the faithful.

A disciple says to imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq: "Tell me if, on the Day of Resurrection, the faithful initiates (*muʾminūn*) would see God". Jaʿfar replied: "Yes, but they have already seen him well before the advent of that Day … when God asked them: 'Am I not your Lord' and they replied 'indeed'" [Quran 7/al-Aʿrāf:172]. The disciple then says that his master remained silent for a long time and then declared: "The initiated faithful already see Him in this world before the Day of Resurrection. Do you not see Him yourself at this precise moment [in front of you, in my person] (*a last^a tarāh^u fī waqtik^a hādhā*)?" The disciple: "May I be your ransom, may I report this teaching under your authority?" Jaʿfar: "No, because a contrarian, ignorant of the profound meaning of these words, will use it to accuse us of assimilationism and infidelity; the vision of the heart is not similar to ocular vision."[96]

4   The Message of the 'Personalized Commentaries'

Is there a secret teaching contained in the 'personalized commentaries' in general and in the *al-Durr al-thamīn* attributed to al-Bursī in particular? Is there a 'subliminal message' which the authors of this literary genre are trying to suggest to the faithful? It is obvious that the figures, positive or negative, identified directly, even explicitly mentioned by the divine Word (according to those believing in the thesis of the falsification) acquire, in the eyes of the

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95   Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, "Kitāb al-tawḥīd", vol. 1, p. 131, chap. 9, n° 6; Ibn Bābūya, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, chapter 8, n° 6, p. 109.

96   Ibn Bābūya, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, chap. 8, n° 20, p. 117. It is interesting to note that the traditions are recorded in the chapter on monotheism, the unicity of God (*tawḥīd*). On the vision of the Imam through the heart see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, the excursus "La vision par le cœur"; Id., "Visions d'imams en mystique duodécimaine moderne et contemporaine (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine VIII)", in E. Chaumont *et al.* (eds.), *Autour du regard. Mélanges islamologiques offerts à Daniel Gimaret*, Louvain-Paris, 2003, pp. 97-124 (= *Religion discrète*, chap. 10).

faithful, a paradigmatic, emblematic dimension, polarised either positively or negatively. When God deigns to speak of the members of the Holy Family of the Prophet, of their friends or of their adversaries, all these figures become the protagonists of a sacred History of universal import: they are actors in the cosmic struggle between Good and Evil. They are raised to the level of symbols in the battlefield of History. They repeat and renew, as the Quran endlessly repeats, the struggle which prophets and saints of the past have had to engage in against the injustice and ignorance of their adversaries. The letter of the Quran (*tanzīl*), at least in its current version, does not permit a full understanding of this fundamental truth. It is the hermeneutic (*ta'wīl*) of the imam that allows it to be seen. The Forces of Good and the Forces of Evil on the one hand, the letter and the spirit of the Book on the other, these two doctrinal conceptions, the foundations of the literature of 'personalized exegesis' seem to pointing the way towards a decisive religious evolution: the first, as yet simple draft of what I have called elsewhere the 'double *Weltanschauung*' characteristic of Shi'ism: the dualistic vision and the dual vision, distinct yet at the same time inseparable and complementary.[97]

At this stage, the first vision seems to come down to a dualistic vision of humanity, according to which the universe is an immense battlefield where, on which the Creation, the people of Good and those of Evil have fought against each other, the different Allies of God (*walī*, plural *awliyā'*), the prophets, the imams, the saints of all times and their followers on the one hand, their adversaries and their followers on the other. Adam and Iblīs, Abraham and Nemrod, Moses and Pharaoh, Muḥammad/ʿAlī and Abū Bakr/ʿUmar, are the protagonists in the long history of this struggle. This dualism derives from a 'theory of opposite' (*ḍidd*, pl. *aḍdād*) illustrated by those fundamental 'pairs', imam/ enemy of the imam (*imām/ʿaduww al-imām*), people of the right/people of the left (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn/ aṣḥāb al-shimāl*), guides of light/guides of darkness (*a'immat al-nūr/a'immat al-ẓalām*) or also *walāya/barā'a*, that is, sacred love towards the Allies of God and sacred distancing from their enemies.[98] The adversaries of the *walāya*, the forces of darkness resisted by *barā'a*, are not necessarily pagans or disbelievers. The Israelites who betrayed Moses by prostrating themselves before the Golden Calf, or the Companions of the Prophet who betrayed him by rejecting ʿAlī, his sole legitimate successor chosen by him,

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97   M.A. Amir-Moezzi & Ch. Jambet, *Qu'est-ce que le Shiʿisme?*, first chapter, pp. 27-40; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 3.

98   M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Seul l'homme de Dieu est humain. Théologie et anthropologie mystique à travers l'exégèse imamite ancienne", *Arabica* 45 (1998), pp. 193-214 (= *La*

are not non-Israelites or non-Muslims but those who reject the essential message of the founder of the religion, what Shiʿism calls the *walāya*, the love and authority of the Ally of God as a theophanic being. These ignorant people thus deprive religion of its deepest meaning and transform it into an instrument of power and violence. Indeed, during the Islamic period, the adversaries, the Enemies (*ʿaduww*, pl. *aʿdāʾ*) were those who rejected the *walāya* of ʿAlī and, subsequently, the imams descended from him. This is true of almost all the Companions of the Prophet, notably the first three caliphs, the Umayyads, the Abbassids and in general those whom Shiʿis call 'the majority' (*al-akthar*) or 'the mass' (*al-ʿāmma*), that is, those will finally be called 'the Sunnis.'[99]

This dualistic conception, very ancient in ʿAlid circles, who were gradually called Shiʿis, is of course communicated by the 'personalized commentaries', including that of al-Bursī, the inheritor of a long textual tradition whose doctrinal consistency and narrative procedures are remarkably coherent across the centuries. As we have seen, the negative expressions and concepts of the Quranic text are almost systematically associated with the adversaries, real or supposed, of Muḥammad and ʿAlī, as affirmative expressions and ideas are associated almost in every case with ʿAlī, members of his family, or his followers.

One of the esoteric layers of this type of Quranic commentary is to justify and confirm the dualistic vision of humanity in the minds of the faithful by inscribing it into the very fabric of the Holy Book.

The second layer would seem play exactly the same role with regard to the second "vision of the world": the dual conception of the Word of God. According to it, Revelation has two levels: the letter, its obvious, literal, exoteric dimension, and the spirit, its hidden, secret, esoteric dimension. The lawgiver prophets, the Messengers (*nabī*, pl. *anbiyāʾ* or more often *rasūl*, pl. *rusul*), are the vehicles of the letter of the Divine Word, addressed to the majority of faithful, whereas their imams are the messengers of the spirit of the same Word, which are taught to a minority of initiates. This dialectic, based on the complementary couple of prophet and imam, the *nubuwwa* (status of prophecy) and the *walāya* (status of the divine Alliance or imamate), the letter of revelation and its spiritual hermeneutics (*tanzīl/taʾwīl*), is at the center of a dual vision of Holy Scripture in which each divine Word has at least two levels of meaning: a manifest, exoteric (*ẓāhir*) level, concealing a secret and esoteric (*bāṭin*) level, the hidden giving meaning to the manifest. As we have seen, from the earliest Shiʿi exegetical works, the personalized *Tafsīrs* – the work attributed to al-Bursī belongs to that tradition – the essential character of the Quran's

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99 The attitude of the Shiʿis towards their adversaries is crystallized in the notion of *sabb al-ṣaḥāba* ("cursing the Companions"); see above, footnote 81.

esoteric dimension lies in the identification of the historical figures to whom the revealed text makes explicit or implicit allusion.

So one may propose the following hypothesis: it may very well be that this dual conception of the divine Word was the consequence of the belief in the falsification and censoring of the Quran. The complete original text, with the names of the all the protagonists in their original places in the Revelation (Quran), was clear enough to require no commentary. Remember the saying, discussed above, of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq: "If the Quran could be read as it had been revealed, not even two people would have differed about it."[100] At this time, the letter and the spirit had no separate existence: the letter was the spirit and the spirit was the letter. The clarity of the letter and the radiance of the spirit were one and the same illumination. It was the falsification that destroyed this unity and made commentary indispensable. This dual conception of Scripture, with Hadith as the necessary commentary on the Quran, was the result of the falsification. One can reasonably conclude that both points of view: that the falsification made the Quran unreadable and thus in need of hermeneutics (a conception which is probably earlier); and that the Quran was intrinsically enigmatic and needed hermeneutics from the outset, were both, in differing degrees circulating in Shiʿi circles of the 3rd/9th century. Indeed, perhaps the popularity of both was the result of their antiquity. Nevertheless, with time and the progressive marginalization of the thesis of the falsification from the Buyyid period onwards, the first theory was gradually discarded and became a minority view.[101]

It is to be noted that, in this doctrinal context, the figure of ʿAlī, which appears in an impressive number of verses, transcends the historical person and becomes a symbol, both of the Imam *par excellence*, the sovereign guide of all the imams of all times, and of their nature and function, which is the Divine Alliance (*walāya*).

We have already seen what a vital relationship ties the Revelation to the figure of the imam who, as the messenger of the spirit, is the tongue of the Book, without which the Book would remain "silent". Without the explanation of the imam, holy Scripture remains a closed Word, unintelligible and therefore inapplicable. ʿAlī is the symbol of this 'master of hermeneutics' (*ṣāḥib al-taʾwīl*) and the *walī*/imam, a conception that countless traditions and documents have enriched. The first imam of the Shiʿis is also the supreme symbol

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100   See above footnote 42 the afferent text.

101   I have devoted numerous studies to the Buyyid turning point of Imamism; see the latest one "Al-Shaykh al-Mufîd (m. 413/1022) et la question de la falsification du Coran", first part.

and personification of the *walāya*, a doctrine which, over the centuries, would acquire more substance.[102] The Imam also becomes the subject as well as the object of hermeneutics, its subject, since he is the master initiated into the hidden meaning of the Word, and its object, as he himself is its ultimate secret, which is the Divine Man.

Both concepts are intimately linked. Scripture has a hidden dimension. Its revelation casts light on the struggle between Good and Evil by identifying the opposing protagonists, the Allies of God and their enemies. In consequence, a new relationship is established between Quranic interpretation, the Hadith, ethics and theology. This itself is the consequence of an obvious fact: Islam was born into and grew up in a violent environment, a period of civil wars which lasted several centuries. The first theology of Islam was born in and of those conflicts. The unending discussion between Shi'is, Murji'is, Qadaris, Mu'tazilis, Jabris … revolve principally around such vital questions as: Why are we fighting one another ceaselessly? What is the cause of all this violence: divine will or human actions? Wherein lies legitimate authority? Does this authority derive from God or from the choice of men? In other words: is there determinism or free will? Who is the just guide, who the unjust ruler? Who is the believer and who the unbeliever? How do we decide what is true faith, what apostasy, what unbelief? Where are the answers to these problems…?[103] Shi'i religious thought took shape in the same troubled world as the rest of Islam and its replies to these questions are coloured by its perception of the historical events of its beginnings and their implications: treason against the prophet Muḥammad and his message, conspiracy against his successor 'Alī, disfiguration of his Faith and falsification of his Book, rendered incomprehensible in its letter, and, as its consequence, the necessity of hermeneutics as a means to reach its spirit and thus its intelligibility.

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102 M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Notes à propos de la *walāya* imamite".

103 The most complete overview of these discussions in their earliest phase is offered by J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, Berlin-New York, 1991-1997 and more recently in the new master work of the same scholar: *Der Eine und das Andere. Beobachtungen an islamischen häresiographischen Texten*, Berlin-New York, 2011.

Icon and Contemplation: ʿAlī as the Face of God and Medium of Meditation

1 Portative Icons

In common with all religious cultures, Shiʿism has a rich tradition of popular art.[1] In this chapter, I will try to show that, in addition to its artistic riches, this tradition can be remarkably complex and will lead us to consider matters which are often thought to be the exclusive domain of learned theologians.

In the very varied panoply of Shiʿi pictorial art, the portable icon (*shamāʾil jībī*, literally 'the pocket pious image' in Persian) seems to have a special role. Its name, *shamāʾil*, is also that of the large mural portraits of saints, such as those of the so-called 'coffee house' paintings and those on the painted fabrics (literally 'screen' or 'veil', *pardeh*) of the itinerant narrators of epic and religious stories (*naqqāl, pardehdār*).[2] The oldest known specimens of the portable *shamāʾil* probably date from the eighteenth century. They had their origins in Iran and India, where they are more widespread than elsewhere, but they can also be found in other Shiʿi regions.[3]

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1 I hereby wish to wholeheartedly think my colleague Mrs Živa Vesel for kindly permitting me to study her collection of Shiʿi icons at the beginning of the 2000s.

2 This Persian meaning of the Arabic term *shamāʾil* (*shamāʾel*, to be more precise, according to Persian pronunciation) is surprising. It is probably an indirect usage of the Arab feminine plural of the word *shimāl*, which means, amongst other things, clothes (especially coat and turban), as well as innate quality or noble character (for this meaning, our word is also the plural of *shamīla*). It is perhaps for this reason that in Persian one very often uses the pair *shikl* and *shamāʾil* to describe either the physical form and moral qualities or the physical form and the clothes that cover it. In this study, the word is considered to be, as in Persian, masculine singular.

3 It is, however, possible that this kind of object, showing the portraits of Shiʿi saints, became particularly popular during or after the reign of the Qajar sovereign Nāṣir al-Dīn Shah (1848-1896), who made great efforts to promote religious painting. He was particularly devoted to the image of the First Imam. See, for example, A. de Gobineau *Trois ans en Asie, Paris*, 1859, p. 316 *ff.*; H. Massé, "L'imagerie populaire de l'Iran", *Arts Asiatiques* 7-3 (1960), pp. 163-178.

The portable *shamāʾil* is a devotional object believed to bring benediction and protection to its owner. It is a rectangular panel made entirely of wood, or wood covered in painted *papier mâché*, measuring about 15-20 cm × 10 cm. It can also be in the form of an altarpiece consisting of two or more panels, occasionally concealing a mirror. It always has a painted polychrome image (*shamāʾil*) presumed to be of holy figures of Shiʿism, almost always that of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.[4] Indeed, all the panels I have seen to date had an image of ʿAlī, either alone or accompanied by one or more other figures, especially the Prophet Muḥammad; his two sons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn; his wife, Fāṭima, who always wears a veil over her face; his servant, Qanbar; or just a lion (an expression of that legendary courage which earned him the sobriquets *Asadullāh*, lion of God, or *Ḥaydar*, lion). The faces of the masculine characters are often unveiled and clearly painted, or occasionally veiled, that is to say, with the faces not outlined.[5] Very often, ʿAlī is seated, his head encircled by a halo, and with his famous sword, Dhū l-faqār, across his knees.[6]

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4   Regarding the myth of the complete prohibition of human portrayal in Islam, false but nonetheless persistent, see the classical study of T. Arnold, *Painting in Islam. A Study of the Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture*. 2nd ed. New York, 1965, pp. 6 *ff.*; also the beautifully written pages by A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, "L'islam, le verbe et l'image", in F. Boespflug et N. Lossky (éds.), *Nicée II, 787-1987: douze siècles d'images religieuses. Actes du colloque Nicée II, Collège de France, 2-4 octobre 1986*, Paris, 1987, pp. 89-117. For a broader discussion of the mediaeval period, see M. Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam*, Paris, 2004, and for an analysis covering the contemporary period see B. Heyberger et S. Naef (eds.), *La multiplication des images en pays d'islam*, Würzburg, 2003; S. Naef, *Y a-t-il une "question de l'image" en islam?*, Paris 2004; and now concerning Shiʿism see F. Suleman (ed.), *People of the Prophet's House. Artistic and Ritual Expressions of Shiʿi Islam*, London, 2015.

5   On the question of veiling and unveiling figures in Islamic images, see the relevant comments of R. Milstein, "Light, Fire and the Sun in Islamic Painting", in M. Sharon (ed.), *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in honour of Professor David Ayalon*, Jerusalem-Leiden, pp. 533-552.

6   On the pronunciation *faqār* and not the more conventional *fiqār*, see Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī, *Muʿjam mā staʿjam*, ed. M. al-Saqqāʾ, Cairo 1364-1371/1945-1951, vol. I, p. 156 and vol. III, p. 1026. The word literally means "possessor of a spine", probably meaning 'double-edged'. This is perhaps why, in iconography, ʿAlī's sword is drawn strangely; with a blade whose extremity is divided into two! Regarding this sword, which was, according to tradition, brought by the angel Gabriel to Muḥammad, who then handed it over to ʿAlī, see, for example, al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, ed. M. Kūčebāghī, Tabriz s.d. (*circa* 1960), 2nd ed., section 4 of 4th chapter; al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, ed. J. Muṣṭafawī, Tehran s.d., 4 vols., "kitāb al-ḥujja", bāb mā ʿind al-aʾimma min silāḥ rasūl allāh, vol. I, p. 337 *ff.*

Figure 1, where we see ʿAlī and his two sons, and figure 2 are very typical of these *shamāʾil.* On the first panel, the image is surrounded by mystical poems. At the top: *ey shīr e khodā …* ('O lion of God …' – i.e. ʿAlī; the rest is faded). At the bottom: *dar hā ye omīd bar rokham baste shodeh* ('The doors of hope have closed before me'). To the right: *ey ṣāḥeb e Dhū l-faqār e* (instead of *o/va*) *qanbar fatḥī* ('O Master of Dhū l-faqār of – instead of "and of" – Qanbar, [grant me] an opening/inspiration'). To the left: (the beginning is faded) *… goshā ye dar e Khaybar fatḥī* ('O you who opened the door of Khaybar – famous battle of ʿAlī – [grant me] an opening/inspiration'). The text is a quatrain attributed to the famous mystic of Khurāsān, Abū Saʿīd Abū l-Khayr (d. 440/1048):

> O lion of God, Prince Lion (ʿAlī's sobriquet) [grant me] an opening/
>   inspiration,
> O you who conquered the fortress of Khaybar by opening its door,
> The doors of hope have closed before me,
> O Master of Dhū l-faqār and of Qanbar, [grant me] an opening/ inspiration.

> *Ey shīr-e khodā amīr-e ḥaydar fatḥī*
> *Vey ḥalqe goshā-ye dar e Khaybar fatḥī*
> *Dar hā-ye omīd bar rokham baste shodeh*
> *Ey ṣāḥeb-e Dho l-faqār o Qanbar fatḥī*[7]

The text begins at the top of the panel and continues in an anticlockwise direction. Finally, notice that the halo surrounding the saints' heads on the first panel is circular, whereas it is in the shape of a flame on the second.[8]

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7 See *Sokhanān-e manẓūm-e Abū Saʿīd Abū l-Khayr*, ed. S. Nafīsī, Tehran, 1334 solar/1956, p. 90, quatrain n° 615. Obviously the poet is playing on the double meaning of the Arab word *fatḥ*: victory (an allusion to the victorious character of the First Imam in combat) and opening/ inspiration (in reference to the latter's role as an initiatory guide). Regarding the image of ʿAlī as lion see in P. Khosronejad (ed), *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shiʿism. Iconography and Religious Devotion in Shiʿi Islam*, London, 2012, the following articles: T. Zarcone, "The Lion of Ali in Anatolia: History, Symbolism and Iconology" (pp. 104-121); R. Shani, "Calligraphic Lions Symbolising the Esoteric Dimension of ʿAlī's Nature" (pp. 122-158); F. Suleman, "The Iconography of Ali as the Lion of God in Shiʿi Art and Material Culture" (pp. 215-232).

8 Pieces of the Vesel collection (see below). On the image in general and ʿAlī's effigies in Shiʿism, see R. Paret "Das islamische Bildverbot und die Schia", in E. von Graf (ed.), *Festschrift Werner Caskel.* Leiden, 1968, pp. 224-232; see also I. Flaskerund, *Visualising Belief and Piety in Iranian Shiism*, London, 2010. For a discussion of the two shapes of the halo and the underlying Sassanid and Christian influences, see R. Milstein, "Light, Fire and the Sun in Islamic

As far as I am aware, the portative *shamā'il*, a popular devotional object, has not so far been mentioned in critical art studies. Reference works such as Samuel R. Peterson's '*Shi'ism and Late Iranian Arts*'; Maria Vittoria Fontana's

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Painting", pp. 537-538; A. Fodor, "A Group of Iraqi Arm Amulets", *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5-6 (1987-88), pp. 266-277; Id., "Types of Shi'ite Amulets from Iraq", in F. De Jong (ed.), *Shia Islam*, Utrecht, 1992, pp. 124-134.

FIGURE 2   Watercolour on paper (13.5 × 6.5 cm), inv. no. 2003, 197, 5 and 10
             © D. ADAM, MUCEM, 2005

Iconografia dell'Ahl al-bayt. Immagini di arte persiana dal XII al XX secolo;
Leyla S. Diba and Maryam Ekhtiyar's *Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch,
1785-1925*, or Pierre Centlivres and Micheline Centlivres-Demont's *Imageries
populaires en Islam* and even monographs such as those of Peter Chelkowski
or ʿAlī Bolūkbāshī, ignore it.[9] The present study makes no claim to filling this
gap, but does hope to examine some possible uses of the object in question.

2   "The Vision by the Heart"

In the summer of 1983, in Shiraz, a dervish of the Sufi brotherhood of the
Dhahabiyya showed me one of the panels, calling it a 'pocket *shamāʾil*'. It was
the first time I had seen one. He told me it was one of a group of spiritual
objects, generally called the dervishes' *waṣla*, which some members of the fra-
ternity must have in their keeping. It is used as an aid to a secret contempla-
tive exercise known as the *vejhe* (from *wijha* in Arabic, see below). The adept
must focus his eyes on the image of ʿAlī, while at the same time concentrating
on his own heart and reciting the *dhikr-e ʿAlī*, that is, tirelessly repeating the
name of the first imam, which is also one of the names of God. The goal is to
achieve contemplation of the 'interior imam', within the heart of the initiate,
in the form of light (*imām-e nūrānī*, literally 'Imam of Light', or *nūrāniyyat-e
imām*, 'the luminous radiance of the imam'). Finally, the mystic added that this
practice is required only of novice dervishes, those who are as yet forbidden
to concentrate on the mental image of the face of the order's current master,
because they might lapse into 'idolatry', into the 'cult of the master', and also
because, without a physical support (the icon), they are incapable of visualis-
ing 'the face of Light' of the imam. So they are given these portraits of ʿAlī, the
archetypal imam, to use as an aid for visualisation, until they become adept at
doing without it.[10]

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9   M.J. Rogers, "The Genesis of Safawid Religious Painting", *Iran* 8 (1970), pp. 121-141;
    S.R. Peterson, *Shiʿism and Late Iranian Arts*, doctoral thesis, New York University, 1981;
    P. Chelkowski, "Narrative Painting and Painting Recitation in Qajar Iran", *Muqarnas* 6
    (1989), pp. 98-111; M.V. Fontana, *Iconografia dell'*Ahl al-bayt. *Immagini di arte persiana dal
    XII al XX secolo*, Naples, 1994; P. et M. Centlivres, *Imageries populaires en Islam*, Geneva,
    1997; L.S. Diba and M. Ekhtiyar (eds.), *Royal Persian Paintings: the Qajar Epoch, 1785-
    1925*, London, 1998; ʿA. Bolūkbāshī, ‹Shamāʾil negārī dar ḥawze-ye honar hā-ye ʿāmme-ye
    Īrān›, *Honar: ketāb-e māh*, special n° about ʿAlī in popular art, 31-32 (2001), pp. 3-7;
    M. Mohammad-Zadeh, *L'iconographie chiite dans l'Iran des Qâdjârs: émergence, sources
    et développement*. doctoral thesis, École Pratique des Hautes Études (Sorbonne) and
    University of Geneva, 2008. The list is obviously not exhaustive.

10 M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Visions d'Imams en mystique duodécimaine moderne et contempo-
    raine (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine VIII)", in E. Chaumont *et al.* (eds.) *Autour*

The Shirazi dervish's revelations about the *shamā'il* interested me profoundly. Indeed, what had struck me at first sight was the posture of ʿAlī holding his sword: kneeling, forearms crossed so that each hand rests on the opposite thigh; this is one of the typical positions of the Sufi *dhikr* practice. However, despite numerous enquiries, I have not been able to find any written confirmation, or even another oral statement, of this initiatory usage of the portable *shamā'il*. Even other members of the same Dhahabiyya brotherhood of my acquaintance declined to tell me anything about their practice of *vejhe* and of any material aids to it.

Several years later, in the course of my university research in Paris, I was able to confirm that the *vejhe* exercise has very ancient roots in the spiritual practice of 'vision by the heart' (*al-ruʾya bi-l-qalb*). Its theological, anthropological and eschatological content had been allusively revealed by compilers of Shiʿi hadiths from as far back as al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī or Ibn Bābūya al-Ṣadūq, from the third/ninth to the fourth/tenth centuries. This encouraged me to extend my research beyond the old corpus of research and to study the persistence of the practice of 'vision by the heart' in Shiʿi mysticism, precisely in the literature of Sufi Imami brotherhoods in modern and contemporary times. The results of these studies have now been published in several works. They could perhaps be usefully consulted for a better understanding of what follows.[11]

In the numerous passages on the practice of 'vision by the heart' in those Dhahabi works which I have been able to consult, I have found no explicit mention of the *vejhe* exercise, nor of the portable *shamā'il* as an aid to contemplation. But two finds dating from the 2000s have enabled me to link my studies of doctrinal texts to the revelations of the dervish from Shiraz.

The first of these finds is that, thanks to the kindness of some old Dhahabi acquaintances, I was given access to a document from inside this brotherhood, aptly entitled 'What is *vejhe*?' The copy of the document I was given is from pages 150-160 of a much larger one which would appear to be a manual of Dhahabi practices and beliefs, written, it would seem, by the present master (2010) of the Dhahabiyya Aḥmadiyya, Dr. Ganjaviyān, or perhaps to his dictation.

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du regard: mélanges Gimaret, Louvain, 2003, pp. 108-109 (now M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *La religion discrète*, pp. 263-264).

11   M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 112-145; Id., "La vision par le cœur dans l'islam Shiʿite", *Connaissance des religions*, nº spécial 57-59 (1999), pp. 146-169 (updated and complemented version of earlier study); Id., "Visions d'Imams …" (see previous footnote).

The second find was a group of 14 portable *shamāʾil* bought in a Tehran market by my colleague and Iran specialist from the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Mrs Živa Vesel, who kindly permitted me to study parts of her collection in the early 2000s.[12] We already know two of the *shamāʾil* of this group (Figures 1 and 2). A third piece from this collection appears to have characteristics very relevant to the practice of *vejhe*, and are a strong confirmation of what the Iranian dervish told me.

By way of introduction to a more detailed examination of these two finds, I will briefly summarize earlier recorded studies of the Shiʿi meditational practice of 'vision by the heart' and the role of ʿAlī as an object of meditation.[13]

The pairing *ẓāhir/bāṭin* (manifest/secret or exoteric/esoteric), omnipresent in Shiʿism, is naturally the subject of theology as well.[14] God himself exists on two ontological levels: that of the Essence (*dhāt*), the secret, non-manifest level, his unknowable Face; and that of the Names and Attributes (*asmāʾ wa ṣifāt*), God's revealed Face. The revealed Face is manifested in the archetypal ideal 'locus' of theophany (*maẓhar, majlā*), which is the Imam, in the cosmic and metaphysical sense.[15] The unfathomable Essence of God can absolutely not be the object of the vision; on the other hand, the Names of God, revealed through the Imam, can be seen, not by the physical eye, but, thanks to the revelation of the light of the imam, 'in' or 'by' the heart (these are the two meanings of the particle *bi* in the expression *al-ruʾya bi-l-qalb*).[16] In this secret spiritual

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12   On this collection and others on popular Shiʿi art, graciously offered by Živa Vesel to the Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (MuCEM) in Marseille, see now L. Kleiber, "Expression populaire et dévotion Shiʿite", *La Revue des Musées de France. Revue du Louvre* 4 (octobre 2006), pp. 64-71.

13   See studies referenced in footnotes 10 and 11.

14   M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Du droit à la théologie: les niveaux de réalité dans le Shiʿisme duodéc-imain", *Cahiers du Groupe d'Études Spirituelles Comparées* (*GESC*) 5; *L'Esprit et la Nature*, Actes du colloque de Paris, 11-12 mai 1996, Milan – Paris, 1997, pp. 37-63; D. De Smet, "Au-delà de l'apparent: les notions de *ẓāhir* et *bāṭin* dans l'ésotérisme musulman", *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 25 (1994), pp. 197-220.

15   See here chap. 4.

16   See M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 112-145; also G. Vajda, "Le problème de la vision de Dieu (*ruʾya*) d'après quelques auteurs šīʿites duodécimains", in *Le shîʿisme imâmite*. Actes du colloque de Strasbourg, mai 1968, Paris, 1970, pp. 31-53; this study, while alluding to the vision by the heart (pp. 44-45), only addresses the first part of this theological issue, the impossibility of the vision of the Divine Essence. In sum, the distinction between the two ontological levels of God, and hence the two complementary parts of the issue of vision, is not considered. See now the synthesis of J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, 6 vols., Berlin – New York, 1991-1997, vol. 5 (1993), pp. 83 *ff*.; on its practice in Sunni Sufism see A. Ventura, "La presenza divina nel cuore", *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 3 (1985), pp. 63-72; Id., "L'invocazione del cuore", in B.M. Amoretti et L. Rostagno (éds.), *Yād Nāma in memoria*

practice, which makes of the initiated follower 'the believer whose heart has been tested by God for the faith' (*al-muʾmin qad imtaḥana llāhu qalbahu li-l-īmān*), the vision of the luminous face of the imam in the heart is equivalent to the contemplation of God's revealed Face. However, everywhere in esoteric Shiʿi literature, ʿAlī is declared to be the supreme vehicle of the cosmic Imam, the highest instance of the manifestation of God.[17] In this theosophic imamology, ʿAlī is naturally the focus of contemplative practices. Two hadiths, which ceaselessly mention mystical works when they address this matter of attaining the vision of God through the vision of the Imam, will suffice to illustrate this. First, the following text, attributed to the Prophet, is recorded in groups of hadiths that are considered an authority on the matter: 'Looking at the face of ʿAlī is an act of religious adoration; remembering him is an act of religious adoration' (*al-naẓar ilā wajh ʿAlī ʿibāda wa dhikruhu ʿibāda*).[18] Next is the hadith attributed to the first imam himself, which is otherwise to be found mostly in Shiʿi mystical sources: 'To know me as light is to know God and to know God is to know me as light. He who knows me as light is a faithful believer whose heart has been tested by God for the faith' (*maʿrifatī bi-l-nūrāniyya maʿrifatu llāh wa maʿrifatu llāh maʿrifatī bi-l-nūrāniyya man ʿarafanī bi-l-nūrāniyya kāna muʾminan imtaḥana llāhu qalbahu li-l-īmān*).[19] The light which can be 'seen' in or by the heart is thus attributed to the face of ʿAlī, the archetypal theophanic being. These initiatory statements on the role of the gaze fixed on a sacred

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di Alessandro Bausani, Rome, 1991, pp. 475-485; G. Gobillot and P. Ballanfat, "Le cœur et la vie spirituelle chez les mystiques musulmans", *Connaissance des religions* 57-59 (1999), pp. 170-204.

17   See here chap. 4.

18   See for example Ibn Bābūya, *al-Amālī* (= *al-Majālis*), ed. M.B. Kamareʾī, Tehran, reprint. 1404/1984, majlis 28, hadith n° 9, p. 138 and majlis 58, hadith n° 1, p. 361 (without mention of the *dhikr* ʿAlī); Id., *Kitāb man lā yaḥḍuruhu l-faqīh*, ed. al-Mūsawī al-Kharsān, s.l. 1390/1970, 5th ed., chap. 158, hadith n° 2145. Note that the word *dhikr*, translated here as "to remember", also means the famous mystical practice of the rhythmic repetition of a word or expression; in this case *dhikr* ʿAlī in the hadith means for a Sufi the repetition of the name of ʿAlī. Note that it is on the strength of this type of narration that a religious authority like ayatollah Nakhjavānī justifies the permissibility of the art of portraying Shiʿi saints; Āyatullāh Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAlī Nakhjavānī, *al-Duʿāʾ al-Ḥusaynī*, Qumm, 1406/1985, pp. 86 *ff.* (cited by Mohammad-Zadeh, *L'iconographie chiite dans l'Iran des Qâjârs* – see above footnote 9 – pp. 100-101).

19   Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 26, pp. 1-7; al-Bursī, *Mashāriq al-anwār*, chapitre 145, pp. 303-307; see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *La religion discrète*, pp. 268-270 and now M. Karbalāʾī, *Sharḥ va taḥlīl-e maʿrifat bi-nūrāniyyat-e Amīr al-muʾminīn*, in Fatḥ ʿAlī b. Mīrzā Bābā Dhahabī Shīrāzī, *Risāla dar bayān-e maʿrifat be nūrāniyyat-e Amīr al-muʾminīn* (in Persian), ed. Ḥ. Naṣīr Bāghbān, Tehran, 1396 solar/2017, pp. 93-177; S. Rizvi, "Esoteric Shiʿi Islam", pp. 229-230.

figure, and elaborated in a complex and subtle theology of the Imam, have equally penetrated 'popular' religious beliefs. For example, there are several portraits of ʿAlī from the Qajar era, some of which show him accompanied by his two sons, in the museum of Saint Maʿṣūma's mausoleum in Qumm, and also in the Imam Ali museum in Tehran, where one finds inscriptions in Persian in this genre, purporting to be the words of the first imam: 'He who regards and kisses my portrait (*shamāʾil*) every day after the dawn prayer, it is as if he had made the pilgrimage to Mecca sixty times'; and 'He who constantly contemplates my portrait will avoid difficulties of every sort; and he who doubts it is not a believer'.

3   "What Is *Vejhe*?"

(What follows is the translation, with commentaries, of an anonymous Dhahabi treatise. The notes and the texts in brackets are mine; digressions with little or no relevance to the topic and eulogistic expressions are not translated):

Greetings to the Face of God who brings peace and security to he who is faithful[20] [in Arabic followed by a free translation in Persian. The text continues in Persian]. There is no doubt that the last Prophet and each of the Impeccables [i.e. Fāṭima and the Twelve Imams] are each the most noble Face of God as well as His most dazzling proof of existence, His hand of power, His all-seeing eye and His all-hearing ear. With all that has been written before, in the book of the *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*[21] and other trustworthy sources, what has just been said needs no supplementary proof. But to derive blessings from it, a text will be quoted; it is taken from the *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* by Shaykh Ṣadūq [Ibn Bābūya, d. 381/991], one of the surest sources of the hadith [see below]. Now, as regards the meaning of the *vejhe*,[22] one of the thorniest questions on the initiatory path and in mystic knowledge, a saying of Imam [ʿAlī], the Commander

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20   *Al-salām ʿalā wajh allāh alladhī man āmana bihi amina*. The expression concerns ʿAlī, called, as in many other places, the Face of God. The expression is found, for example, in ʿAlī's *Ziyāra* (prayers recited during the pilgrimage on the tomb of the first imam in Najaf in Iraq; innumerable editions), ziyāra no. 7.

21   The book is quoted above in footnote 6. On this work and its author see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (m. 290/902-03) et son *Kitāb baṣāʾir al-darajāt*", *Journal Asiatique* 280/3-4 (1992), pp. 221-250 (a more extended version is to be found in id., *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 4); A.J. Newman: *The Formative Period of Twelver Shīʿism: Hadith as Discourse Between Qum and Baghdad*. Richmond, 2000, chapters 5 and 7.

22   The word *vejhe* is the Persian pronunciation of the Arab word *wijha*, which literally means, like *wajh*, 'face of a body, of an object'. It also has the Quranic meaning of 'the direction in which the object of prayer is found' (Quran 2: 148: *wa li-kulli wijhatun huwa*

of the Believers, a decisive proof, will be added. And now, the hadith reported by Shaykh Ṣadūq in the *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, on the nature of the Master of the *walāya* [i.e. ʿAlī][23] and the fact that he is the Face of God: [The Arabic text of the hadith and its Persian translation follows. The beginning of the long list of hadith transmitters has been omitted, as not relevant to the subject.] ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā [the eighth imam] records from his father Mūsā b. Jaʿfar ... [*the seventh imam; the list goes on up the lineage of the imams*] ... who has it from his father ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, from the Prophet, from the angels Gabriel, Michael, Seraphiel, who has it from God, who declares:

I am God. There is no god save from Me. I created all creatures with my power. I chose from amongst them my messengers and from amongst them I chose Muḥammad as friend, intimate confidant and chosen one, and charged him to be an envoy to my creatures. And I chose ʿAlī to [complete the mission of] Muḥammad, I chose him as his brother, successor, lieutenant and messenger of his work after him. I chose ʿAlī as my apostolic vicar to my faithful, to explain to them my Book, so that he will judge them according to my justice. I appointed ʿAlī to be the friend who guides [my people] away from distraction, as my threshold, as my abode where he who enters is saved from fire, as my fortress where I protect who takes refuge there from every bad thing in this world and the next. I have made of ʿAlī my face; I will never turn my face away from him who turns his towards ʿAlī. I have made of ʿAlī the proof of my existence in the heavens and on earth for every one of my creatures in such wise that I will accept none of their acts if they do not add their faith in the *walāya* of ʿAlī and at the same time in Muḥammad's, my messenger's. ʿAlī is my hand, stretched out over my servants; he is the blessing with which I gratify those I love. The servants whom I love, and whom I have taken into my benevolence, I grant them the *walāya* and the friendship of ʿAlī, while those who suffer my anger, suffer it because they have ignored ʿAlī, his *walāya* and his friendship. I swear by my glory and my greatness that he who loves ʿAlī will be protected from fire and I will welcome him into my garden; he who turns away from the love of ʿAlī will know my anger and I will plunge him into the Fire, what an evil destiny![24]

[The text continues in Persian.] In the Quranic commentary *Burhān*, in the exegesis of the verse 88 of surah 28, 'Everything is mortal except his face', imam Ṣādiq [the sixth imam] writes: 'We, the people of the Prophet's family, we are that

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muwallīhā, 'For everyone a direction in which to turn in prayer'). The use of the word in Dhahabi practice doubtless includes the two meanings.

23   Regarding the *walāya*, a central notion in Shiʿi faith, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *La Religion discrète*, chap. 7.

24   Ibn Bābūya, *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, ed. M. Ḥ. Lājevardī, Tehran 1378/1958, chap. 31, hadith nº 19, vol. 2, p. 49. See also Ibn Bābūya, *al-Amālī*, majlis 39, hadith nº 10, pp. 222-223.

immortal face.'[25] The main motive for quotations of this sort of tradition is to show that the Infallible Proof [i.e. the imam or more generally the Impeccables, either the Prophet, his daughter Fāṭima, or the imams] is the eternal Face of God. He who would turn towards God must turn towards this face.

The people of the mystical gnosis called the act of approaching the divine face *vejhe*.[26] What does it mean? In saying that the imam is the divine face, does one mean his face and his physical appearance? As we said previously, one of the most difficult theological and philosophical ideas in the declarations of the initiated and the sages is around the spiritual practice of *vejhe* and the contemplation of the presence of the adored being by means of this practice. In technical terms, it is also called meditation (*tafakkur*) or just the mental form [or 'face', or 'visage'] (*ṣūrat i fikriyya*), as Mawlavī sung [Jalāl al-Dīn Balkhī Rūmī, d. 672/1273. The following verses are from his *Mathnavī*; They are a variant of verse no. 3207, 'the History of the Bedouin and the Philosopher', Daftar 2[27]]:

> Through the practice of *dhikr* [rhythmic repetition of a sacred word], a path opens
> Thanks to the practice of *fikr* ['meditation'], [the form] of the King appears.

> *dhekr ān bāshad ke bogshāyad rahī*
> *fekr ān bāshad ke pīsh āyad shahī.*

Or again, Shaykh Shabistarī [Saʿd al-Dīn Maḥmūd, d. 720/1320. The following verses come from his *Golshan-e rāz*, the answer to the first question, verse 2[28]]:

> Meditation is to go from the illusory to the real,
> It is seeing the universal in the particular.

> *tafakkor raftan az bāṭel sū-ye ḥaqq*
> *be jozv andar bedīdan koll-e moṭlaq.*

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25   This is a quotation from the famous Quranic commentary *al-Burhān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* by Hāshim b. Sulaymān al-Baḥrānī (d. 1107 or 1109/1695-6 or 1697-8); 5 vols., Tehran s.d., *sub* Coran 28:88. One finds this exegesis of the Face in practically all the Shiʿi *tafsīr*s; see, for example, M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, p. 116, footnote 225.

26   The author makes a play of words with the root WJH: *wajh* (face), *wijha/vejhe* (practice of contemplation), *tawajjuh/tavajjoh* (direction, moving towards something, concentration); for other sources on the same subject, see Amir-Moezzi, "Visions d'Imams", pp. 111 sq. (= *Religion discrète*, p. 266 sq.).

27   Ed. R. Nicholson, reprint. Tehran n.d. (*circa* 1950), Daftar 2, p. 427.

28   Ed. Ḥ. Rowshandel, Tehran 1351 solar/1972, 2nd ed., p. 59.

This matter is difficult to understand because the people of God spoke of it only in symbols, which is the case of the verses just quoted. The reason is that the vast majority of men are incapable of penetrating beyond the limits of the sense organs, and their understanding is marred by it. Yet these divine questions outstrip not only the senses, but reason. This is why one can only speak allusively of subtle concepts like the *vejhe*. To show the truth of the fact that the religious practice of the 'people of knowledge and perfection' is dependent on the *vejhe*, a remark made by the treasurer of the secrets of the Revelation after Muḥammad, the Master of the *walāya* ['Alī], the Commander of the Believers, will suffice. With it we can dispense with reasoned argument.

In the book *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ*, Shaykh Mufīd [d. 413/1022] records what follows from Aṣbagh b. Nubāta [a famous disciple of 'Alī], who lists the chain of transmitters:

... From the height of the pulpit of the Kūfa mosque, 'Alī thus addressed the people: 'Question me before you lose me! Here resides knowledge. In my mouth I have the saliva of the Prophet; question me, as I possess the science of beginnings and of ends'.[29] At that moment, a man named Dhi'lib known for his eloquence, knowledge and courage, stood up and said: '... Commander of the Believers! Have you seen your Lord?' 'Alī answered: 'Take care, Dhi'lib! Would I worship a Lord that I had not seen?' 'So describe him.' 'Poor man! One cannot see Him by looking; hearts see him by the reality of faith.'[30]

The purpose of this quotation of the sermon [of 'Alī], taken from the *Ikhtiṣāṣ*, is to show that, in the words of the Commander of the Believers, seeing God is possible only thanks to the vision of the heart. He who has attained the 'realities of faith' can see Him and he understands the conditions of this vision. The novice in matters of faith may not deny it, and he must be made aware that the veils of unjustified denial are among the densest and darkest veils between God and his creatures. He must also be made aware that to believe in the reality of this vision is a necessary precondition for the perfection of his faith. He should overcome the obstacles that divide him from God through spiritual progression and asceticism, under the guidance of divine instructors who have themselves overcome these obstacles. As Master Rāz [Abū l-Qāsim Sharīfī Shīrāzī, one of the great masters of the Dhahibiyya order, d. 1286/1869] so aptly said:

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29   Regarding saliva as a means of transmitting knowledge and spiritual virtues, see here chapter 3.

30   Al-Mufīd, *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ*, ed. 'A.A. Ghaffārī, Qumm n.d., "Khuṭbat li-amīr al-muʾminīn", 235-236. For another version of the same discourse and its sources see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, p. 123.

> Thanks to his love, I have reached a point
> Where I see nothing other than the eternal Witness.
> The universes and everything therein were eclipsed
> When I attained the eternal Face of God.
> In the spaces of immensity beyond space
> I flew, without wings, for thousands of years.
> And there I saw only the Face of the Real
> All I speak and hear is thanks to Him.

From everything that has just been written, we can conclude the following:

1. The infallible imam is the Face of God.
2. Through the imam, a vision of divine beauty is possible, not with the eyes of flesh, but with the eye of the heart and thanks to the realities of faith. Since the imam is himself the sum total of the realities of faith, he is the direction of prayer in the heart in the act of adoration of God.[31] But this is not about his physical body; it is into his *walāya* that one must pass, to be reborn there eternally, and so to achieve his holy vision through the heart and be able to declare: 'I would not adore a Lord that I would not see' [a long section follows on the subject that the vision of the Impeccables so attained cannot be false, since no evil creature, in this case Satan, has the power to embody them].

4 Analysis of a Panel from the Vesel Collection

In the *shamā'il* shown in figure 3,[32] 'Alī, with a circular halo around his head, is kneeling, forearms crossed and holding Dhū l-faqār on his thighs. We have already noted the similarity of this position to one of the typical postures of the Sufi *dhikr*. Indeed, *dhikr* formulas decorate the panel all around the portrait:

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31 It is noteworthy that in the technical vocabulary of Shiʿism, 'faith' (*īmān*) means the esoteric dimension of Islam, the teaching of imams or Shiʿism. The term differs from *islām*, which means, still in the technical lexicon, the exoteric dimension of Muḥammad's message; see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, index *s.v.* In addition, it is necessary to state that for Rāz Shīrāzī, the Imam of Light contemplated in the heart of the enlightened Dhahabi is also the 'black light' of the spiritual form of the eighth imam, 'Alī al-Riḍā, the alleged founder of the order; see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 105-106; Id., *La Religion discrète*, pp. 260-262.

32 Also reproduced in the article of Kleiber, "Expression populaire et dévotion Shiʿite", illustration n° 7 (black and white), p. 69.

FIGURE 3   Watercolour on paper (15 × 10 cm), inv. no. 2003, 197, 7
             © D. ADAM, MUCEM, 2005

at the top is the expression *yā ʿAlī*; then, from top to bottom and from right to left: *yā Bāqī* (beginning faded), *yā Qayyūm* (ending faded), *yā Dayyān, yā Burhān, yā Ghufrān, yā Subḥān, yā Samīʿ* (beginning faded), and *yā Baṣīr* (ending faded).[33] Finally, two verses divided into hemistiches are inscribed at the top and bottom of the portrait respectively, in horizontal writing to the left and to the right, and in vertical writing from the top to the bottom and from the bottom to the top. It is believed that their symbolic allusions have now been deciphered from informations found in ancient texts and in the treatise on the practice of *vejhe*. The first verse reads:

> So long as the love of ʿAlī is reflected in the mirror of the heart
> One can say that my heart is the place where divine mercy shows itself.

> *tā dar āyīne-ye del mehr-e ʿAlī jelve namāst*
> *mītavān goft delam maẓhar-e alṭāf-e khodāst.*

The second verse reads:

> The Lion of God [ʿAlī] came into being,
> Thus every hidden secret was revealed.

> *asadollāh dar vojūd āmad*
> *dar pas-e parde har-če būd āmad.*

The position of ʿAlī, the *dhikr* formulas, and the poems chanting ʿAlī's theophanic secrets, the beatific vision of his love, which is reflected like a light in the heart, all show the strong links between our *shamāʾil*, the practice of the vision by the heart in general, and the exercise of the *vejhe* in particular. This cluster of mutually supporting evidence would seem to confirm the words of the dervish from Shiraz describing the portable *shamāʾil* as a physical aid to mystical contemplation.

Another *shamāʾil* of ʿAlī, a varnished painting on a little *papier mâché* mirror box in the History Museum in Bern (Switzerland), is, in this respect, entirely comparable to our *shamāʾil*. Indeed, on the edges of ʿAlī's portrait, in which he is surrounded by his two sons, his companions and angels, several verses, of which the first three follow, are finely calligraphied:

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33   On these Names, see D. Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*, Paris, 1988, index, *s.v.*

Here is the portrait of the Lion of Truth, the Friend of God,
Or is it the mirror reflecting God?

ṣūrat-e shīr-e ḥaq valī-yye khodāst
yā ke āʾīne-ye khodāy namāst?

When wisdom contemplated the image of the face of ʿAlī,
He declared that it was the mirror of God's beauty.

dīd čon ʿaql naqsh-e rūy-e ʿAlī
goft āʾīne-ye jamāl-e khodāst.

The place where the divine Light is manifest is the beauty of ʿAlī,
It is in him that the secret of the creation of God appears.

maẓhar-e nūr-e ḥaq jamāl-e ʿAlī-st
va ndarū serr-e ṣonʿ-e ḥaq peydāst.[34]

The fact that the initiatory use of *shamāʾil*, and especially the portrait of ʿAlī, is more widespread than in the Dhahabiyya order, gives more support to the hypothesis. We know it is also part of the *waṣla* (on this term see above, beginning of part 2) of the Khāksār dervishes and maybe also of the order of the Niʿmatullāhiyya.[35] For the Bektashiyya, who inherited the Ḥurūfiyya doctrine of the sacredness of the human face and its theophanic nature, the portrait, as well as the calligraphied name, of ʿAlī, serve as a powerful medium for meditation and contemplation.[36] The figure of God appears on the face of the

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34   L.S. Diba & M. Ekhtiyar, *Royal Persian Paintings*, panel no. 163. We are dealing with a work
      of Muḥammad Ismāʿīl, made in 1288/1871, for the sovereign of Iran, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shah,
      Bernisches Historisches Museum, exhibit no. 73/1913.

35   On the first see M. Modarresī Čahārdehī, *Khāksār va Ahl-e ḥaqq*, Tehran, 1368/1989, p. 23;
      as for the second, see illustrations n. 1, 8 and 9 from M. Ekhtiyar, "Exploring *Ahl al-bayt*
      Imagery in Qajar Iran (1785-1925)", in F. Suleman (ed.), *People of the Prophet's House*,
      London, 2015, pp. 146-154 (the dimensions indicated are however somehow larger than
      those of the pocket *shamāʾil*).

36   On the subject in general see F. de Jong, "The Iconography of Bektashism: a Survey of
      Themes and Symbolism in Clerical Costume, Liturgical Objects and Pictorial Art",
      Manuscripts of the Middle East 4 (1989), pp. 7-29 (with illustrations); I. Mélikoff, "Images
      et symboles chez les Qezelbāš", in H. Beikbaghban (ed.), *Images et représentations en
      terre d'Islam*, Actes du colloque international de l'université de Strasbourg: 3 et 4 février

Bektashi man because of the name of ʿAlī: the *ʿayn* is featured in the oval rim of the eye, and the *lām* is formed by the line of the nose and the *yāʾ* by the curve of the moustache. Thus, on both sides of the virtual vertical median line of the face, two 'mirrored' ʿAlī-s appear, covering the face. One could thus say that an iconographical identity is established between the being of the enlightened individual – represented by his own face – ʿAlī and God.[37] This spiritual doctrine is widely attested. These celebrated verses of the famous Bektashi poet Ḥilmī Dede Bābā (d. 1907) will illustrate our point:

FIGURE 4
Bektashi drawing of ʿAli's shape on the human face
PRIVATE PROPERTY OF THE AUTHOR

1994, Tehran, 1997, pp. 40-65 (with illustrations); S. Bağci, "From texts to pictures: ʿAlī in manuscript painting", in A.Y. Ocak (ed.), *From History to Theology: ʿAlī in Islamic Beliefs*, Ankara, 2005, pp. 229-263 (and illustrations); M. Uğur Derman, "ʿAlī in Ottoman calligraphy", *ibid.*, pp. 291-303 (and illustrations); O. Mir-Kasimov, "Notes sur deux textes Ḥurūfī: le *Jāvdān-Nāma* de Faḍlallāh Astarābādī et l'un de ses commentaires, le *Maḥram-Nāma* de Sayyid Isḥāq", *Studia Iranica* 35/2 (2006), pp. 203-235; Id., *Words of Power. Ḥurūfī Teachings Between Shiʿism and Sufism in Medieval Islam. The Original Doctrine of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī*, London, 2015, index *s.v.* Face (*wajh, rū*).

37   I. Mélikoff, *ibid.*, p. 45, 51; Id., "La divinisation d'Ali chez les Bektachis-Alevis", in A.Y. Ocak (ed.), *From History to Theology. ʿAlī in Islamic Beliefs*, pp. 83-110.

I held a mirror in front of my face
                        ʿAlī appeared in my eyes
I looked at myself
ʿAlī appeared in my face.

tuttum aynayi yüzüme / Ali göründü gözüme
nazar eyledim özüme / Ali göründü gözüme.[38]

In this connection, it is worth noting that some portable *shamāʾil*s do contain a mirror. In some pieces of the Vesel collection, the surface which has the portrait of ʿAlī on it slides out like a drawer to reveal a mirror. So anyone who contemplates the panel can rapidly go from ʿAlī's image to the reflection of his own face and vice versa.

5   Icon Contemplation: Between Interpretation and Applications

The theoretical doctrines which underly the practice of "vision by the heart", that is, as we have seen, the contemplation of the luminous spiritual form of the imam by the perception of the heart, would appear to be interpretations of two series of distinct traditions. First, in early Hadith, there is an interpretative adoption/adaptation of the Aristotelian theory of visual perception, acquired no doubt through translations of brief simple summaries, according to which vision is only possible if both subject and object of vision share the same nature. According to a tradition attributed to the 10th imam ʿAlī al-Hādī: "'Visibility' (literally "vision" *al-ruʾya*) is only possible when there is transparent

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38   Ḥilmī Dede, *Dīvān*, ed. B. Atalay, Constantinople, 1909, 30, quoted by I. Mélikoff, "La divinisation d'Ali", pp. 101-102. In his poem, Ḥilmī passes constantly from ʿAlī to God, of whom ʿAlī is precisely one of the Names, and then to himself. The identity of the self (which is different to the ego), of the imam and of God is illustrated by the Shiʿi saying that philosophical and mystical works never cease mentioning in different ways: "He who knows himself, knows his imam who is his Lord"; see, for example Ḥaydar Āmolī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār wa manbaʿ al-anwār*, ed. H. Corbin et O. Yahia, Tehran-Paris, 1969, p. 270, 307-309, 315, 464; Id., *Risāla naqd al-nuqūd fī maʿrifat al-wujūd*, in the same volume, p. 675; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-mashāʿir*, ed. H. Corbin, Tehran-Paris, 1964, pp. 186-188; Id., *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, ed. litho, Tehran 1283/1865, pp. 475-476; Abū l-Ḥasan Sharīf Iṣfahānī, *Tafsīr mirʾāt al-anwār*, s.l. (Iran) n.d., the introduction in particular pp. 13-15. For purely Sufi sources see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Une absence remplie de présences: herméneutiques de l'Occultation chez les Shaykhiyya (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine VII)", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 64/1, pp. 1-18, especially pp. 17-18 (= *La Religion discrète*, chap. 14, in particular pp. 352-353).

air between the seeing subject and the seen object. Without that air and without light between the subject and the object, no visibility is possible. Now, the existence of common factors in the action between subject and object implies the identity of the nature of both."[39] In agreement with this theory, the consubstantiality of the "spiritual body" of the imam and the heart of the initiated faithful, which allows the vision between them, is reflected in a whole range of cosmo-anthropological hadiths which describe the creation of the bodies, hearts and spirits of human beings. Indeed according to these traditions, both the pre-existential body of the imam and the heart (seat of the spirit) of his follower are created from the same celestial 'raw material' known as ʿIlliyyīn.[40] This identity of their natures makes the vision of the "body of light" of the imam by the "eye of the heart" of the faithful possible. Finally, the practice of contemplation by means of the *shamāʾil*, as we have seen, can be considered as a practical interpretation and instrumental application of those theoretical doctrines.

Although it is true that the word 'icon' possesses a technical meaning in Christianity in general, and in Orthodox Christianity in particular, it is admissible to apply the term to the portable *shamāʾil* if we attach a more general meaning to the word, that of the sacred work of art such as Plotinus proposes, a definition, moreover, on which the Christian definition of the icon is founded.[41] This definition is based more on the vision of the seeing subject than on the form of the object that is being looked at.[42] On the subject of the contemplation of a statue of the temple, for example, Plotinus speaks in the *Enneads* (1, 6-9 and 11, 1-13) of a look that is not 'of the mortal eyes', but one which the 'interior eye' mysteriously executes.[43] This exercise of concentration that transforms the object contemplated:

"[So that the sacred piece of art can perform its role] it is necessary that the eye which looks becomes the same as the object which is being looked at, in order to apply itself to contemplating it. An eye could never see the sun

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39   Al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī*, Kitāb al-tawḥīd, bāb 9, no. 4; Ibn Bābūya, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, ed. al-Ḥusaynī al-Ṭihrānī, Tehran 1398/1978, bāb 9, p. 110, no. 7. See also the similar statements going back to the theologian Hishām b. al-Ḥakam, a follower of the sixth imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, reported by al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī, op. cit.*, no. 12 (the fumbling vocabulary of the discourse is to be noted).

40   On these traditions, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 96-97; Id., "Worlds and Their Inhabitants. Some Notes on Imami-Shiʿi Cosmo-Anthropogony", in E. Coda & C. Martini Bonadeo (eds.), *De l'Antiquité tardive au Moyen-Âge*, pp. 526-527.

41   A. Grabar, "Plotin et les origines de l'esthétique médiévale", *Cahiers Archéologiques* 1 (1945), pp. 20 *ff.*

42   On this, see the subtle reflections of P. Hadot, *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard*, Paris, 1997.

43   *Ibid.*, p. 87.

without becoming similar to the sun, nor could a soul see beauty without being beautiful." Even more relevant to our topic is this inscription about its icons in a tenth-century oriental church: 'Small is the image you have under your eyes; immense is he who bears the image of the Infinite [in himself]. Revere the original, of which here you only have the image.'[44] This iconic function of the *shamā'il* is equally manifest in another piece of the Vesel collection, an icon made in India on which ʿAlī's portrait is surrounded by a sort of mandala, an aid to meditation and contemplation in several Indian religions and faiths.[45]

FIGURE 5   Watercolour on paper (24 × 23 cm), inv. no. 2003, 197, 12
                  © D. ADAM, MUCEM, 2005

44   Quoted by J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Histoire de l'art byzantin et chrétien d'Orient*, Louvain, 1987, p. 109.

45   The inscriptions, in more than approximate Arabic, at least indicate the place and date of the making of the *shamā'il: hādhā al-naqsh* (sic) *imām* (sic) *al-awwal ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib*

The portable icon, the 'pocket *shamā'il*' in the words of the dervish from Shiraz, thus forms a powerful link between Shi'i pictorial art and the mystical brotherhoods, or even between popular beliefs and Sufi traditions. This link is not the only one; other characteristic connections can also be made: the screens on which the scenes of the holy history of Shi'ism are painted are called, almost everywhere in Iran, 'dervishes' screens' (*pardeh-ye darvīshī*), and the stories told in front of these screens by narrators are called, especially in Khorasan, 'dervishes' stories' or even 'the true stories' (*ḥikāyāt-e darvīshī/ ḥikāyāt-e ḥaqīqī*).[46] We know that many of the travelling narrators belonged, and still belong, to the Khāksāriyya brotherhood.[47] It would seem that some very popular expressions in Iran about 'Alī all came from Sufi milieux or from the 'chivalric' circles of the *futuwwa*: 'May the hand of 'Alī protect you' (*dast-e 'Alī negahdārat*), 'May Murtaḍā 'Alī's shadow be on your head' (*sāye-ye Murtaḍā 'Alī bar sarat*), 'May 'Alī be your support and protector' ('Alī *posht o panāhat*), 'O 'Alī, help' (*yā 'Alī madad*), "'Alī king of men, the man of the battlefield' ('Alī *shah-e mardān mard-e meydān*) and so on.[48] But the spiritual functions of the

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bāb waṣī allāh (sic) *wa 'Alī allāh* (here is the image of the First Imam, 'Alī son of Abī Ṭālib, threshold to the legatee of God [sic, perhaps instead of 'threshold *and* legatee'] and 'Alī is God); *fī sana khamsa* (sic) *wa mi'atayn ba'd al-alf sana 1205 fī balada Bamba'ī* ([made] in the year 1205 [1790-91] in the province of Bombay). However, it is not sure that this information is to be trusted.

46   See for example A. Panāhī Semnānī, *Tarāne va tarāne sarāyī dar īrān*, Tehran, 1376 solar/ 1996, pp. 39 *ff.*

47   See Gramlich *Die schiitischen Derwischorden Persiens*. 3 vols. Wiesbaden, 1965-1981, I, p. 70 *ff.*, in particular pp. 85-88; Ch. Tortel, *Saints ou démons? Les Qalandar-s Jalālī et autres derviches errants en terre d'islam: Russie méridionale et Inde aux XIIIᵉ-XVIIᵉ s.* Thèse de doctorat, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Sciences Religieuses, Paris 1999, chap. IV, pp. 191-197.

48   See M. Mīhandūst, "Pendāre hā va bāvardāsht hā-ye 'āmiyāne", *Honar: ketāb-e māh*, special number on 'Alī in popular art 31-32 (2001), pp. 10-16; N. Karīmiyān Sardashtī, "Pažūheshī dar bāre-ye ahl-e fotovvat", *ibid.*, pp. 40-45. On *futuwwa* (in Persian: *javānmardī*, the great movement of brotherhoods of trade guilds), see, amongst others, F. Taeschner, *Zünfte und Bruderschaften im Islam. Texte zur Geschichte der Futuwwa*, Zurich, 1979 (*Magnum Opus* of the author which collects and complements his numerous previous works on the subject); C. Cahen, "Mouvements et organisations populaires dans les villes de l'Asie musulmane au moyen-âge: milices et associations de Foutouwwa", *Recueil de la Société Jean Bodin* 7 (1955), pp. 273-298; Id., *Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie musulmane du moyen-âge*, Leiden, 1959; J. Baldick, "The Iranian Origin of the *Futuwwa*", *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli* 50 (1990), pp. 345-361; M. Zakeri, *Sāsānid Soldiers in Early Muslim Society. The Origins of 'Ayyārān and Futuwwa*, Wiesbaden, 1995, *passim*; L. Ridgeon, *Jawānmardī. A Sufi Code of Honour*, Edinburgh, 2011; Id., "'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in Medieval Persian Sufi-*Futuvvat* Treatises", in M.A. Amir-Moezzi *et al.* (eds.), *L'ésotérisme Shi'ite*, pp. 665-686; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "'Les descendants d'Adam sont les

icons of the Shiʻi saints, and of ʻAlī more specifically, are possibly the most important evidence of the great extent to which the borders between learned religion and popular religion, and between ancient doctrines and enduring traditions, can be porous. Here, as in many other cases, the union between art and mystical thought and practice forms the most solid bridge between the two shores.

organes d'un même corps'. Remarques sur la solidarité non-communautaire en islam", in A. Supiot (ed.), *Solidarité. Enquête sur un principe juridique*, Paris, 2015, pp. 183-197.

Epilogue

"People! I am the Christ; I who heal the blind and the lepers … I am the Christ and he is I … Jesus the son of Mary is part of me and I am part of him; he who is the greatest Word of God."

"… I am the First; I am the Last. I am the Hidden; I am the Manifest. I am the One who gives; I am the One who takes. I am the resurrector of the dead … I am the one who spoke through the mouth of Jesus … I am the Saviour of this time. I am the Christ. I am the Second Christ. I am the Jesus of this time … I am the Compassionate; I am the Merciful. I am the High One; I am the Most High One …"

In proclamations like these, ʿAlī identified himself with Jesus as the 'Second Christ', a christological and eschatological reference to the Second Coming of Jesus as the Saviour at the End of Times. ʿAlī thus claims to be the Messiah, the Divine Man of biblical spirituality, possessing a double nature, human and divine, a man of flesh sharing the attributes of God. These sermons attributed to ʿAlī (discussed above in chapters 2 and 4) were recorded in innumerable Shiʿi sources, the earliest of them dating back to the 3rd and 4th/9th and 10th centuries. However, they are very likely to be even earlier, possibly dating back to the times of ʿAlī himself, for what interest would the faithful have in forging these statements and putting them into the mouth of their first imam, claiming him to be the Divine Man *par excellence* and the Saviour of the End of Times, when the world had not ended and he had died assassinated long before and had tragically failed in his plans to govern? Such a forgery would have completely undermined the credibility of their first Master. For, as we have seen, after the assassination of ʿAlī (which, however, some of his followers had not believed, as they extended the Christian docetist doctrine to ʿAlī), and the apocalyptic threats contained in Muḥammad's message have been driven away; after the civil wars, the simultaneous conquests and the founding of the empire, the Shiʿis, although they contested large parts of the official history as rewritten by the caliphal power, moderated a certain number of their beliefs about ʿAlī. His messianic nature was stripped of its apocalyptic dimension, but the doctrine of his double nature as a mediator between the divine and the human was maintained, and these attributes would be passed on to the imams of his descendance.[1] Thus, the divine Guide, Master of the *walāya*, the divine

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1 However, the messianic, even apocalyptic, dimension, will survive in a great many revolutionary ʿAlid movements of the first centuries of Islam, movements which were in armed conflict with the caliphal power and often in disagreement with the political options of the imams;

Alliance and Friendship, became the locus of manifestation of the Names and Attributes of God, the "Organ" of God; sent down to bring about His will on earth, the initiating sage and the living Word of God. It is thanks to the Imam, the divine Master, that God continues to communicate with humans, it is thanks to him that the heavens do not fall silent.

"We are the Eye of God", the imams endlessly repeat, "we are the Hand of God, we are the Face of God, we are His Side, His Heart, His Tongue, His Ear." The imams/*walī* in general and ʿAlī in particular are given such titles as "Proof of God", "Vicar of God", "Path of God", "Threshold of God" or expressions from the Quran: "the Supreme Sign" (*al-āya al-kubrā*, Quran 79:20), "the August Symbol" (*al-mathal al-aʿlā*, Quran 16:60), "the Strongest Handle" (*al-ʿurwa al-wuthqā*, Quran 2:256 or 31:22) (see above chapter 4). It is in this context that ʿAlī is said to have declared: "God has no Annunciation greater than I, no Sign greater than I."[2] or "God has granted me the vision of His Kingdom; hence nothing is hidden from me of what came before me and of what will come after me."[3] The purpose of Creation is that God's creatures may know Him. So the Imam, as the ultimate theophanic being and the "Supreme Symbol" of what can be known of God, is therefore the reason and purpose of creation. "He who knows us knows God and he who disregards us disregards God", "Without God, we would not be known and without us, God would not be known." The Guide, in his human function as the "speaking Quran", is the guardian and the transmitter of initiatory knowledge, of which the ultimate content is himself in his theophanic reality, his divine nature. At the same time, the theophanic Imam is interiorized by the faithful as a "guide-light" (*imām nūrānī, nūrāniyyat al-imām*), ever present in their hearts who, thanks to their spiritual and ascetic exercises, can achieve their own vision and thus attain their personal Lord 'organically': "He who knows himself, knows his Lord." (see above chapter 9).

These doctrines were recorded in the immense corpus of Hadith during what may be called the 'classical age' of Imami sources, in the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries, and were later included in great compilations of Iranian

see e.g. A.A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism. The Idea of Mahdī in Twelver Shiʿism*, New York, 1981, introduction; W.F. Tucker, *Mahdis and Millenarians: Shiite Extremists in Early Muslim Iraq*, New York, 2008; S. Amir-Arjomand, "Origins and Development of Apocalypticism and Messianism in Early Islam: 610-750 c.e.", in Id. (ed.) *Sociology of Shiʿite Islam*, Leiden, 2016. On the "quietist" position of the imams of the ḥusaynid line leading to Twelver Shiʿism, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, part III-1.

2   One finds this statement of ʿAlī as a commentary to the first verse of surah 78 "(The Announcement, *al-Naba*') in all Shiʿi Quranic commentaries and other kinds of Shiʿi sources that refer to this verse.

3   Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 26, p. 141.

authors from the Safavid and Qajar periods, between the 10th/16th and the 13th/19th centuries.[4] Meanwhile, the divine figure of ʿAlī was never forgotten. It was passed on more or less discretely in the main currents of Shiʿism, such as Imamism or Ismailism, and openly in the sects (such as the Nusayris and the Druzes)[5] said to be 'extre mist'. As Orkhan Mir-Kasimov clearly demonstrates in his text in the appendix of this book, the figure of ʿAlī was much elaborated upon in mystical and messianic circles, not necessarily Shiʿi, which founded great empires both before and after the Mongol invasion. In them, the 'religion of ʿAlī (*dīn ʿAlī*)' was reborn, notably in the Muslim Orient, in both learned and popular circles. The phenomenon, remarkable both for its geographical extent and its duration, is distinguished by some remarkable poetry, especially in Persian, that ideal vehicle of mystical spirituality, from the Ottoman Balkans to Moghul India, including Iran and Central Asia.

Here are some verses of Faḍlallāh Astarābādī (796/1394), the founder of the influencial Ḥurūfiyya movement:

> What the verse 'Say, He is God' describes, is ʿAlī / the King of Kings of the universe of knowledge, is ʿAlī.
> This universal Dot from which individual beings have come / By God that is ʿAlī, by God it is ʿAlī.[6]

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4   M.A. Amir-Moezzi, Ch. Jambet, *Qu'est-ce que le Shīʿisme?*, third part; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *La Preuve de Dieu*, Epilog.

5   See for example H. Halm, *Die islamische Gnosis. Die extreme Schia und die ʿAlawiten*, Zurich-Munich, 1982; M.M. Bar-Asher & A. Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion. An Enquiry into its Theology and Liturgy*, Leiden, 2002; D. De Smet, *Les Épîtres sacrées des Druzes. Rasāʾil al-ḥikma*, Louvain, 2007; M. Asatryan, *Controversies in Formative Shīʿi Islam. The Ghulat Muslims and Their Beliefs*, London, 2017.

6   Quatrain cited by O. Mir-Kasimov, see relevant text in his footnote 36 where the sources are indicated. My translation, a little different from his, attempts to be literal: *Mawṣūf-i ṣifāt-i "Qul huwa Allāh" ʿAlīst / Dar ʿālam-e maʿrifat shahanshāh ʿAlīst. Ān nuqṭa-ye kul ke juzw az ū peydā shud / Wa-llāh ke ān ʿAlīst, bi-llāh ʿAlīst.* In the first hemistich, the verse cited is Quran 112:1, drawn from the surah called "the purity of faith" (*al-ikhlāṣ*) or "divine Unicity" (*al-tawḥīd*). Faithful to Shīʿi theophanic theology, the poet "describes" ʿAlī as God made manifest, the saving and transformative Presence of a personal God and an antidote to the purely abstract monotheism of an absolutely inaccessible God. Faḍlullah seeks to remain loyal to a very early and particularly audacious Imami exegetical tradition according to which each time the Quran uses the pronoun *huwa*, it is an allusion to ʿAlī (see al-Sayyārī, *Kitāb al-qirāʾāt*, ed. E. Kohlberg and M.A. Amir-Moezzi, in *Revelation and Falsification*, nᵒ 481, pp. 126-127 of Arabic text, pp. 217-218 of the English commentary). In the second hemistich, ʿAlī is described by an expression derived from the royal Iranian title: "King of kings"; in other words, ʿAlī is the master of other "kings" of knowledge, most probably other sages or saints, the Friends of God (*awliyāʾ allāh*). The second verse is a clear allusion to the famous statement attributed to ʿAlī, recorded in countless, mostly Shīʿi, late mystical sources: "All of the Quran is contained in the

It can still be seen today it in the devotional songs of the minstrels of Central Asia:

> One night, I saw in a sweet dream the beauty of the cupbearer of (the heavenly source of) Kawthar / ʿAlī son of Abī Ṭālib, the Prince of the Initiates, the Lion.
>
> He gave me a book containing the Names of God / I opened it and I saw the name of the King of Men (ʿAlī) at the beginning.[7]

Or also:

> This magnificent King who, in the night of the celestial ascension / was at one with Aḥmad the mighty one (i.e. the prophet Muḥammad), was ʿAlī.
>
> This is not infidelity, the infidelity is not that at all / For ʿAlī is as Being is; ʿAlī has been since Being has.[8]

ʿAlī also occupies a central place in the iconography and the theology of the Bektashis and in the Sunni Sufi Qawwālī songs of Pakistan. These always begin with a devotional song praising the divine nature of ʿAlī. There are many more examples. It is however true that very few people, even academics are aware of this. Shiʿism is a 'discrete religion' and ʿAlī is its well-guarded Secret. So apart

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Opening (*al-Fātiḥa*, the first surah); all of the Opening is contained in the formula that opens it (the *basmala*): 'In the name of God the Merciful the Compassionate'; this entire formula is contained in the letter b that starts it (*bi -smi llāh ...*); all of the letter b in the dot (*nuqṭa*) which is beneath it (in the written form of the letter bāʾ in Arabic). And I am that Dot"; see for example Rajab al-Bursī (a contemporary of Faḍlallāh), *Mashāriq al-anwār*, ed. ʿA.Gh. Ashraf al-Māzandarānī, Tehran, 1426/2005, chap. 3, p. 45; Id., *Mashāriq al-amān*, ed. ʿA. Zayn al-Dīn, Beyrouth, 1430/2009, p. 48; Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmolī (another contemporary), *Jāmiʿ al-asrār wa manbaʿ al-anwār*, éd. H. Corbin-O. Yaḥyā, Téhéran, 1347 solaire/1969, index des hadith-s, p. 720 (*anā l-nuqṭa taḥt al-bāʾ*); al-Nabāṭī al-Bayāḍī (m. 877/1482), *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm ilā mustaḥaqqī l-taqdīm*, éd. M.B. al-Bihbūdī, Najaf, 1384/1964, vol. 1, p. 222. See also the article of M. Terrier in Annexe 2, afferent texts of the footnotes 72, 79 *sqq.*, 91, for the philosophical approaches of the *ḥadīth al-nuqṭa taḥt al-bāʾ*.

7   *Shabī dīdam be khāb-e khosh jamāl-e sāqi-ye kawthar/ʿAlī ebn-e Abī Ṭālib amīr al-muʾminīn ḥaydar. Be dastam dād yekī daftar ke dar vey nām-e yazdān būd/sar-e daftar goshūdam shāh-e mardān būd sardaftar.* Cited by G. Van den Berg, *Minstrel poetry from the Pamir mountains. A study on the songs and poems of the Ismâʿîlîs of Tadjik Badakhshan*, Wiesbaden, 2004, pp. 483-484 (nº G64).

8   *Ān shāh-e sarafrāz ke andar shab-e miʿrāj / bā Aḥmad-e mokhtār yekī būd ʿAlī būd. Īn kufr nabāshad sokhan-e kufr na īnast / tā hast ʿAlī bāshad tā būd ʿAlī būd. In ibid.*, pp. 488-89 (the *ghazal*; nº G 70). See also ead., "Literary afterlives: Medieval Persian poets and strategies of legitimation in the oral poetry of the Ismāʿīlīs of Tadjik Badakhshan", JSAI 45, 2018, pp. 369-370 (all of the article pp. 355-380).

from his place in the religion of the imams, ʿAlī is the central mystery of many other currents of spiritual Islam.

Why ʿAlī and not some other figure among the companions of the Prophet? For several decades, critical research on the origins of Islam and of the Quran, and the gradual integration of studies of early Shiʿism with it, have led to remarkable progress in our knowledge of these subjects.[9] This progress will perhaps help us to discover new areas of research on the figure of ʿAlī. Conversely, the study of different aspects of the figure of ʿAlī in the early sources could help us better understand the origins of Islam, still enigmatic on many points.

These new studies have led to two decisive turning points in the last fifty years, first in the 1970s, with the works of Günter Lüling, in Erlangen in Germany, and of John Wansbrough, Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, in Oxford and Cambridge in England.[10] Then, in the 2000s, new studies of the Quran, such as the very controversial one by Christoph Luxenberg in Germany, or the many publications of the French scholar Alfred-Louis de Prémare on the period that interests us, have been in several respects complemented by the contribution of 'material history', for example the archaeological researches and resultant publications of Christian Robin, and the epigraphical researches of Frédéric Imbert.[11] These studies and other similar ones have consumed great quantities of ink and have attracted much, sometimes justified, criticism, including some by their own authors who, with great intellectual honesty, have recognized their shortfalls and approximations. But they have introduced, durably and perhaps definitively, new epistemological and methodological criteria into research on the origins of Islam and the Quran. These criteria are, broadly speaking, of two kinds: first, we have noted above that the Islamic sources on

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9   A monumental synthesis of these studies, since the 19th century but mostly for recent decades, augmented by the results of current studies, is now published in M.A. Amir-Moezzi and G. Dye (dir.), *Le Coran des historiens*.

10   Let us just mention, among the work of these authors (it will also be the case of the next footnotes in order not to burden them): G. Lüling, *Über den Ur-Qurʾān. Ansätze zur Rekonstruktion vorislamischer christlischer Strophenlieder im Qurʾān*, Erlangen, 1974 (updated English version: *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation. The Rediscovery of a reliable Reconstruction of a comprehensive pre-islamic Christian Hymnal hidden in the Koran under earliest Islamic reinterpretation*, Delhi, 2003); J. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, Oxford, 1977; Id., *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*, Oxford, 1978; P. Crone & M. Cook, *Hagarism, The Making of the Islamic World*, Cambridge (GB), 1977.

11   C. Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran*, Berlin, 2000; A.-L. De Prémare, *Les fondations de l'islam*, Paris, 2002; Id., *Aux origines du Coran*, Paris, 2004; for the many and important works by C. Robin and F. Imbert, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi and G. Dye (dir.), *Le Coran des historiens*, vol. 1, chap. 1: C. Robin, "L'Arabie Préislamique", bibliography, pp. 150-152; and chapter 17: F. Imbert, "Le Coran des pierres", bibliography, pp. 730-731.

the origins of Islam and the Quran, especially the proto-Sunni and Sunni ones, are absolutely not credible. They are full of contradictions, improbabilities, special pleading, historical untruths, and legends of all kinds and origins. The inclusion of studies on Shi'i sources about the civil wars between believers, the Arab conquests and the birth of the empire as well as the desire to obscure the apocalyptic dimension of Muḥammad's message have been a major factor in this process.[12] We shall return to this point. To further study these problems, it is also essential to integrate the study of non-Muslim sources, ideally contemporary with or shortly following the advent of Muḥammad, that is to say, Jewish sources in Hebrew or Aramaic, Christian sources in Greek, Ethiopian, Armenian and above all Syriac, Zoroastrian Pahlavi sources and so on.[13] This does not of course mean that Shi'i and non-Muslim sources tell us the historical truth, far from it. They are often just as biased as the proto-Sunni and Sunni literature. But they do provide new elements, new arguments, and new perspectives which are frequently very fruitful.

These new directions and their contributions, as rich as they are diverse, have, over the last twenty years, provoked a veritable explosion in the number of scientific studies on the beginnings of Islam. They have also instigated the creation of research teams in which specialists in Arabic and Islamic, but also in Christian, Jewish, and Manichean studies of the period, experts in Biblical and other regional languages in Late Antiquity, archaeologists, paleographers, codicologists, epigraphers and even historians of astronomy or of geology, all collaborate.

Among the very many results of this intellectual and academic ferment, two are of particular interest here. First, contrary to what Muslim literature claims, pre-Islamic Arabia was far from being a land of ignorance, paganism and barbarism. It was not an island lost in the middle of an ocean, but an immense region situated between the greatest centres of monotheistic civilization and religion, between Byzantium and the Yemen, between Iran and Abyssinia. For many centuries the Arabs, their merchants and their caravans, had travelled between these lands, transporting all kinds of merchandise and also people, books, ideas and beliefs. The Arabia of the cities, that of the sedentary tribes

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12   M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux, passim*, and especially chapters 1 and 2; here chap. 2.

13   See for example A. Palmer, S. Brock and R.G. Hoyland (eds.), *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, Liverpool, 1993; R.G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, Princeton, 1997; S. Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muḥammad's Life and the Beginnings of Islam*, Philadelphia, 2012; id., *A Prophet Has Appeared. The Rise of Islam Through Christian and Jewish Eyes*, Oakland, 2021.

(not the Arabia of the Bedouins of the desert), and notably that of the cit-
ies of Mecca, Medina and Ṭāʾif, in other words the Arabia of Muḥammad, had
been for centuries the home of the biblical monotheisms (Jewish, Christian,
Judeo-Christian, Manichean). Apart from decisive archeological and epigraph-
ical discoveries, the proof is in the Quran itself, for biblical and parabiblical
terminologies, adapted, it is true, to Arabian culture, can be found in their
thousands, almost on every page there.[14]

Another element, which the most recent philological and historical studies
of the Quran confirm more and more consistently, is the importance, in the
entourage of Muḥammad, of Syriac-speaking forms of Christianity (but which
ones from among the many currents of what is known as Oriental Christianity?)
and/or what is vaguely designated by the term "Judeo-Christianity" (broadly
speaking the religion of those Jews who, whilst retaining their old beliefs and
practices, accepted Jesus as the Christ). Contrary to the majority of specialists
from the nineteenth and the most of the twentieth centuries who believed
in the preponderant influence of Judaism on the Quran, the last few dozen
years have been marked by increasingly precise studies proving the far greater
weight of Syriac-speaking forms of Christianity (where, however, Jewish ele-
ments can also be important).[15]

Taking into consideration the studies of the last few decades, and comple-
menting them with information derived from the critical investigation of
early Shiʿism, it is possible, as a working hypothesis and a possible direction of
research, to propose the following overview of the advent of Muḥammad and
its religious and historical implications in the first Hijra century.

Around the 6th and 7th centuries AD, in the vast lands which stretch
from Byzantium and Iran to the Yemen and Abyssinia, in a world rife with

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14   See now, among many other studies, M. Kropp (ed.), *Results of Contemporary Research
      on the Qurʾān: the Question of a Historico-Critical Approach*, Beirut, Orient Institute &
      Würzburg, 2007; A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai & M. Marx (eds.), *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical
      and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu*, Leiden, 2010; G.S. Reynolds (ed.), *The
      Qurʾān and its Historical Context*, London, 2008, vol. 1 and 2011, vol. 2; Id., *The Qurʾān and
      its Biblical Subtext*, London, 2010; C. Robin, "Recension de J. Chabbi, *Le Seigneur des tribus.
      L'Islam de Mahomet*", in *Bulletin Critique des Annales Islamologiques* 18, 2002, pp. 15-21; and
      especially now Id., "Arabie préislamique", in *le Coran des historiens*, vol. 1, pp. 51-154.
15   For example, G.G. Stroumsa, "Jewish Christianity and Islamic Origins", in B. Sadeghi,
      A.Q. Ahmed, A. Silverstein and Robert G. Hoyland (eds.), *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts:
      Essays in Honour of Patricia Crone*, Leiden, 2015, pp. 72-96; for the many works by
      Guillaume Dye on the subject see his bibliography in G. Dye, "Le corpus coranique: con-
      texte et composition", *Le Coran des historiens*, vol. 1, chap. 18, bibliography, pp. 831-833.
      See also D. Bernard, *Les disciples juifs de Jésus du 1er siècle à Mahomet. Recherches sur le
      mouvement ébionite*, Paris, 2017.

apocalyptic and messianic expectations, Muḥammad came to announce the imminent end of the world, call on people to repent, to practice virtue and piety and to flee from the imminent wrath of God. His first followers were most probably known as the 'faithful' (*muʾminūn*), among whom would be Jews and Christians of whom no 'conversion' would ever be demanded.[16] These were probably pious men and women dedicating themselves to spiritual and ascetic exercises and, above all, non-militant pacifists calling on their fellow men and women to love God and to practice mutual help and charity before the coming Judgement Day. A second group of followers who came to Muḥammad later on and may be called 'the emigrants' (*muhājirūn*) (and 'those who submit', *muslimūn*?), would have joined him for reasons of prudence after his military victories. ('the hypocrites' the Quran refers to?). They were militants, advocating the military preparation of the Earth for the *eschaton*, the conquest and the quest for war booty; for them, contrary to the first group, holy war in 'the Way of God' was superior to any other religious practice. The relationships between the two groups seem to have been far from brotherly and peaceful.[17]

Can this division, which was decisively brought to light by Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, be convincingly superimposed on the division we know between the Banū Hāshim, the immediate family of Muḥammad (and of course ʿAlī), who were responsible for religious affairs before Islam on the one hand, and on the other hand the Banū ʿAbd Shams, whose family the Umayyads were responsible for economic affairs and the security of the tribe of Quraysh? The enduring conflicts and tensions between the two groups, well before and after Islam, are known by all.[18]

Belonging to a biblical culture, and proclaiming the imminent end of times, Muḥammad announced the advent of the Messiah, probably in the person of Jesus. Now, for a certain number of his followers, certainly among those of

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16   S. Bashear, *Studies in Early Islamic Tradition*, Jerusalem, 2004; F.M. Donner, *Muḥammad and the Believers: at the Origins of Islam*, Cambridge (United States), 2010; S. Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet*. See also the earlier studies such as P. Casanova, *Mohammed*. See here chapter 2.

17   K.-F. Pohlmann, *Militanz und Antimilitanz im Koran. Historisch-kritische Untersuchungen zur Korangenese und zu den Ursprüngen des militanten Islam*, Münster, 2018; Id., "Commentaire des sourates 8 et 9", in *le Coran des historiens*, vol. 2a, pp. 335-375 et 377-417. According to this hypothesis, proposed with great rigour and impressive erudition, the final version of the Quran would be a text of a compromise in order to please both groups.

18   See the introduction of C.E. Bosworth to his edition and English translation of al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-nizāʿ wa l-takhāṣum fīmā bayn Banī Umayya wa Banī Hāshim: Book of contention and strife concerning the relations between the Banū Umayya and the Banū Hāshim* (*Journal of Semitic Studies*. Monograph nº 3.), Manchester, 1981, where the English scholar speaks of a kind of literary genre dedicated to the subject.

the first group around Muḥammad, ʿAlī would have been a new manifesta-
tion of Jesus, a 'Second Christ' and Saviour of the end of the world (see above
chap. 2).[19] For them, the divine figure of ʿAlī as the Messiah would have been
the centre of gravity of the Message of Muḥammad, he himself being simply
the announcer of the advent of their saintly hero. These hypotheses might pro-
vide an explanation for two remarkable characteristics of ʿAlī. First, his name
which, as we have seen (see above chap. 2), is certainly a sobriquet, given that
apparently no one in that period had the name, at least in the Quraysh tribe.
This could also be the case of other 'names', that of Muḥammad himself and
also that of ʿUmar. But among those unique 'names', the name of ʿAlī is the
only divine name. It means the Elevated, the Most High.[20] And ʿAlī is the only
person from Muḥammad's circle to whose name the term 'religion' is attached:
dīn ʿAlī, the religion of those who saw in ʿAlī not only the most fervent follower
and intimate friend of their prophet, but also the Saviour and Guide of the End
Times announced by him (see above chap. 3).

As the years went by and the world did not end Muḥammad seems to have
abandoned the idea of the imminence of the Last Judgement and to have intro-
duced some changes into his message. The evolution is in any case reflected
in the Quran. He could very well have turned to reflecting on the affairs of
his family, his followers and his succession, which ultimately could only go, it
seems, to ʿAlī, the father of his only male descendants but also his most loyal
friend and perhaps his Messiah.[21] ʿAlī, known for his religious qualities, was an
apparently uncontested candidate in the eyes of the first group of followers,
but the prospect of his rise to power was a threat to the second, Umayyads. And

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19   As we have seen, the first followers called themselves the faithful, *muʾminūn*. Is this the
      reason why ʿAlī is called in Shiʿism in an exclusive way *amīr al-muʾminīn*, Commander
      or Prince of the faithful? Even the other imams do not have the right to use that title
      (M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Preuve de Dieu*, pp. 264-265). Furthermore, the term *amīr* literally
      means "the holder of the *amr*", polysemic term (order, affair, power …) that often refers
      to the end of the world and/or Judgement Day in the Quran. It corresponds to the mes-
      sianic status of ʿAlī but also of Muḥammad as the prophet announcing the end of the
      world (*nabī al-malḥama*). A question thus remains: if the followers of Muḥammad called
      themselves the *muʾmin*, why is it that Muḥammad himself is not called *amīr al-muʾminīn*?
      Let us add that the term *muʾmin* later assumes the technical meaning of 'believer in the
      teachings of the imams' in Shiʿism, in other words the Shiʿi faithful. Does this however
      mean that only the Shiʿis have remained loyal to the original Message of Muḥammad, as
      they have always claimed and as was the case of his very first non-militant followers?
20   Regarding this name of God see D. Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*, index *s.n.* and espe-
      cially pp. 206-207.
21   Regarding ʿAlī as the sole legitimate successor of Muḥammad from historical, anthropo-
      logical and religious standpoints see W. Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad: A Study
      of the Early Caliphate*, Cambridge, (England), 1997; here chap. 3.

with good reason. ʿAlī had had always displayed his bravery in often leading the armies of the Prophet so that his ideas would prevail. He is said to have greatly distinguished himself in the battle of Badr, where he killed a large number of Muḥammad's adversaries belonging to the Quraysh, a tribal coalition of which the Umayyads were the most powerful element. They would never forget.

Muḥammad died in mysterious circumstances. After the civil violence which marked the conflict over his succession, the influential men of Quraysh and their protégés, probably those of the second group, militants and conquerors, assumed the leadership of the Prophet's followers. In the reign of the first three caliphs, the civil wars intensified, while at the same time the conquests began. The southern and African regions of Byzantium and the whole of the Iranian Sassanian empire fell to the Arabs within a few decades. But this narrative omits a remarkable fact, the total absence of ʿAlī from the wars of conquest, uniquely among the famous 'companions' of Muḥammad. Indeed, it seems that he did not consider these wars to be compatible with the letter and spirit of the first messages of Muḥammad or of the beliefs of his first followers. These wars were waged by his lifelong adversaries, the 'hypocrites', the *munāfiqūn* of the Quran. He would not take part in them. Meanwhile, he seems to have been mostly occupied in making a written version of the Quran. According to Shiʿi sources, he was doing this in opposition to his treasonous enemies, who were preparing a falsified version of the Holy Book.[22]

The short reign of ʿAlī was an uninterrupted series of bloody civil wars and ended with his assassination in the year 40/661. For his ultimately tragic caliphate, he mysteriously moved his capital several thousand kilometres, from Medina in Arabia to Kūfa in Iraq. Here is another 'singularity' of this personality which historians fail to explain. Could it have been due to the proximity of the largely Arab city of Ḥīra, one of the vibrant intellectual and spiritual centres of the former Sassanian empire? It was in this same city that a number of Christian groups (mostly non-trinitarian, anti-Nicean and anti-Chalcedonian) were still living. They had been driven from Byzantium because of their accusation of heresy and had sought refuge in the Sassanian Empire. There were also Gnostics with messianic tendencies such as Marcionites and Bardesanians, and also Manicheans communities who were active in the region until the 4th/10th century.[23] Did this land, already marked by Late Antique esoteric and

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22   M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux, passim* and especially chapters 1 and 2.

23   See J. van Reeth, "Ville céleste, ville sainte, ville idéale dans la tradition musulmane", *Acta Orientalia Belgica*, special issue "Décrire, nommer ou rêver les lieux en Orient. Géographie et toponymie entre réalité et fiction. Jean-Marie Kruchten *in memoriam*", 24 (2011), pp. 121-131, especially p. 125; Id., "*Le Coran silencieux et le Coran parlant.* Nouvelles perspectives sur les origines de l'islam", *RHR* 230.3 (July-September 2013), pp. 385-402, in particular pp. 393-394; I. Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ḥīra. Eine arabische Kulturmetropole im spätantiken*

gnostic ideas, not appear more welcoming to the 'new manifestation of the Messiah' than the land of Hijaz, allied to Syria, a country committed since the death of Muḥammad to the cause of the worst enemies of ʿAlī?[24] Is this another example of those convergences between ʿAlī, pre-Islamic Iran and Iranian converts, which led the Greek historian Theophanes the Confessor (born 759 AD) to call him "ʿAlī the Persian" in his *Chronography*? Is it a coincidence that the day of Ghadīr Khumm, the 18 Dhū l-ḥijja of the year 10 Hijra (according to the unanimously accepted date), when, according to the Shiʿis, Muḥammad declared ʿAlī to be his successor, corresponds (with a margin of error of a few days) to March 20th 632, the ancient Nowrūz, the Iranian New Year's day? Ghadīr Khumm is one of the greatest Shiʿi holidays, that is well-known. But what is less well known is that it is apparently the case of Nawrūz as well. There are indeed many traditions passed down from the imams which praise the Iranian New Year and describe it as a sacred cosmic event of the highest importance. The story of Shahrbānū, a Sassanid princess and daughter-in-law of ʿAlī as she was the wife of al-Husayn, is consistent with the same convergences.[25] Finally, it should be added that, according to some recent studies,

Kontext, Leiden, 2013; Ph.J. Wood, "Ḥīra and her saints", *Analecta Bollandiana* 132 (2014), pp. 5-20.

24   On the presence of Gnostic-like doctrines in a good number of early Shiʿi currents see for example L. Massignon, "Die Ursprünge und die Bedeutung des Gnostizismus im Islam"; Id., "der gnostische Kult der Fatima im schiitischen Islam"; H. Corbin, "De la gnose antique à la gnose ismaélienne"; Id., "L'idée du Paraclet en philosophie iranienne"; U. Rubin, "Pre-existence and Light. Aspects of the Concept of Nūr Muḥammad"; W. al-Qāḍī, "The Development of the Term *Ghulāt* in Muslim Literature with Special Reference to the Kaysāniyya"; H. Halm, *Kosmologie und Heilslehre der frühen Ismāʿīliyya. Eine Studie zur islamischen Gnosis*; Id., *Die islamische Gnosis*; Id., "Das 'Buch der Schatten'. Die Mufaḍḍal-Tradition der *ghulāt* und die Ursprünge des Nuṣairiertums"; M.M. Bar-Asher & A. Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion*; D. De Smet, "Au-delà de l'apparent: les notions de *ẓāhir* et *bāṭin* dans l'ésotérisme musulman"; W. Tucker, *Mahdīs and Millenarians: Shiite Extremists in Early Muslim Iraq*; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, chap. 4 and epilog; Id. *et al.*, *L'ésotérisme Shiʿite*, parts I and II; M. Asatryan, *Controversies in Formative Shīʿi Islam*.

25   On "ʿAlī the Persian", see *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor* (written a century and a half after the death of ʿAlī), English translation of *Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. C. De Boor, Oxford, 1883, by C. Mango and R. Scott, Oxford, 1997, p. 98. On the importance of Nawrūz and its association with Ghadīr in Shiʿism, see J. Walbridge, "A Persian Gulf in the Sea of Lights: The Chapter on Naw-Rūz in the *Biḥār al-Anwār*", *Iran* 35, 1997, pp. 83-92; R. Shaʿbānī, *Ādāb va rusūm-e Nawrūz*, Tehran, 1378 s./1999, pp. 168-169, 248; M. Bar-Asher, "The Iranian Component of the Nuṣayrī religion", *Iran* 41, 2003, pp. 217-227; id. & A. Kofsky, *The ʿAlawī Religion. An Anthology*, Turnhout, 2021, pp. 147-148; On Shahrbānū and these convergences see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Shahrbānū, dame du pays d'Iran et Mère des imams: entre l'Iran préislamique et le Shiʿisme imamite", *JSAI* 27 (2002), in Honour of Shaul Shaked, pp. 497-549 (= *La religion discrète*, chap. 2).

Muḥammad, a prophet but also a merchant, hence perfectly aware of interna-
tional events in the region, including the ceaseless wars between Byzantium
and Iran, (the title of surah 30 of the Quran is 'The Byzantines'), indirectly sup-
ported the Sassanians against Byzantium.[26] The fact seems to be confirmed by
his attempts to attack Byzantine lands towards the end of his life. It is also true
that Quranic Christology is in disagreement with the official Christology of the
great "universal" Church of Constantinople and in agreement with currents
precisely deemed to be "heretical" by Byzantium and present in Iranian lands,
especially in Ḥīra/Kūfa as we have just seen.

   After ʿAlī, power fell into the hands of the Umayyads. The civil wars, the
ruling house's ferocious repression of their opponents, notably the ʿAlids, and
the expansion of the empire continued. ʿAlī was cursed in public places. His
followers were considered to be the principal enemies of the state. Under
the fifth Umayyad ruler, ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān, towards the turn of the 1st
and 2nd centuries Hijra, Arabic became the official administrative language
of the Empire. Its religion was now officially called 'islām'. Some of its most
important laws which were to govern the conquered lands and peoples were
written. Its Book became the official version of the Quran (a compromised
version by a caliph who sought to impose unity on his empire by violence?).
The Messiah was to be neither Jesus nor ʿAlī, but a indeterminate descendant
of Muḥammad. The figure of Muḥammad was glorified, probably in order to
marginalise that of ʿAlī. A few decades later, the Abbassids took power in a
bloody revolution in which the Umayyads were almost exterminated. But they
continued the repressive anti-ʿAlid policies of their predecessors, reducing
the status of ʿAlī to that of a Companion on a par with the others, attempting
to radically minimise his claims to sanctity and thus recuperate his figure for
themselves (see the Introduction). But ʿAlī was nevertheless omnipresent in
the early history of Islam. In a sense he remains one of its focal points to this
day, as the positions taken for or against him have decided both events and
beliefs. We have seen that he has been and is still revered by hundreds of mil-
lions of Muslims, notably in the East, at least for the last seven centuries. His
figure, still in many ways mysterious, is maybe a key to the understanding of
Islam, from its origins to today.

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26   The issue is addressed in S. Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet, passim*; Id., *The Apocalypse
      of Empire. Imperial Eschatology in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, Philadelphia, 2018, see
      index; J. Van Reeth, "L'Hégire et la fin du monde", *Oriens Christianus* 100, 2017, pp. 188-226,
      notably pp. 211 *ff*.; however, see S. Shoemaker's hypothesis, based among other things on
      the Chronicle of Khūzistān, a Syriac document from the 7th century CE, that Muḥammad
      was alive at the time of the Arab conquest of the Sassanid capital and led the war against
      the Iranians himself; S. Shoemaker, *A Prophet Has Appeared. The Rise of Islam through
      Chrsitian and Jewish Eyes*, Oakland, 2021, pp. 133-134.

Divine Knowledge and Messianic Action: The Figure of ʿAlī in Mystical and Messianic Circles (5th/11th-10th/16th Centuries)

Orkhan Mir-Kasimov

1 Introduction

This paper grew out of the following question: how was the figure of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, central to Shiʿi Islam, integrated into mystical and messianic circles other than the Shiʿi, and what role did it play in the profound transformations undergone by the Islamic world in the period from the 5th/11th to the 10th/16th century? The beginning of the period was remarkable for the disintegration of the caliphates: in chronological order, those of the Umayyads in the Iberian Peninsula, the Fatimids in North Africa and in Egypt, and the Abbasids in the Middle East, whilst its end saw the emergence of a new geopolitical order with new conceptions of power. In the Eastern part of the Islamic world, this new order was represented by the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal empires founded between the 8th/14th and the 10th/16th centuries. In the Western part of the Islamic world the situation was more complex. In the Iberian Peninsula, Islamic al-Andalus was definitively lost to the Christians around the end of the 9th/15th century, whereas in North Africa, the Fatimid caliphate was followed by two powerful empires, the Almoravids (5th/11th-6th/12th centuries) and the Almohads (6th/12th-7th/13th centuries) (the latter having claimed the title of caliphate for themselves). These three empires played a decisive role in the subsequent geopolitical configuration of that region.

The figure of the caliph to some degree symbolised the cohesion of the Islamic community under a legitimate government, that is to say, a government that ensured that the life of the community was organised according to the precepts laid down by the Prophet.[1] Even if the interpretations of what constitutes 'legitimate power' varied significantly from one caliphate to the other, and even if the caliphs did not always wield real power,[2] the institution of the caliphate and the sacredness of the caliphal

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[1] This role of caliph is in the meaning of the Arabic word *khalīfa*, 'successor', 'the one that comes after' (the Prophet). For the semantic evolution of this concept in early Islam, see P. Crone and M. Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious authority in the first centuries of Islam*, Cambridge, 1986.

[2] The authority of the caliphs, in the religious as well the political spheres, could be purely nominal, delegated to scholars and doctors of law on the one hand and to powerful clans with important military and political power on the other. This was notably the case of the

line became a source of near universal legitimacy for the exercise of power in the Islamic world.

The disappearance of the caliphal power was thus a shock to the Muslim communities concerned. The shock might put the very survival of these communities at risk, if an alternative figure could not be found who had a symbolic significance similar to that of the caliph. Thus, the disintegration of the Umayyad caliphate in the Iberian Peninsula was followed by the division of its territory into several independent Muslim kingdoms, none of which had any convincing legitimacy. Even if the mystico-messianic current, and especially the movement led by Abū al-Qāsim Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1251), produced a new conception of religious and political legitimacy, it did not succeed in securing sufficient support in the peninsula, and it was consequently absorbed into the Maghrebi movement of the Almohads.[3] Since no independent conception of religious and political legitimacy emerged to re-unify al-Andalus, the weakening of the Almohads resulted in the progressive loss of this part of the Islamic world to the Christian *Reconquista*.

Similarly, the fall of the Fatimid caliphate in North Africa was a deep shock to the Ismaili community. But this community did manage to survive and to recover because the line of their caliphs-Imāms was not interrupted. There was therefore no need for a radically new conception of religious and political authority, even though important changes to the theory of the Imamate were subsequently made by the surviving branches of Ismaili Shiʿism. In the Eastern part of the Islamic world, the fall of the Abbasid caliph of Baghdad as result of the Mongol invasions marked the beginning of two centuries of intense searching for a new idea of religious and political authority.[4]

In the course of this search, the figure of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib,[5] who was revered as an ideal of the chivalric warrior for the faith and as a source of initiatory knowledge associated with messianic beliefs, became the rallying point of several different currents and factions within Islam. In the following pages, we will closely examine some characteristics ascribed to ʿAlī which played an important part in the creation of a new figure of authority in the post-caliphal Islamic world, the figure of a charismatic and/or divinely inspired messianic king.

Abbasid caliphs under Buyid domination (4th/10th century) and again under Seljuk domination (5th/11th-6th/12th centuries).

3   On Ibn Qasī, his thought and movement, see V. Lagardière, 'La tariqa et la révolte des Murīdūn en 539 H / 1144 en Andalus', *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 35 (1983), pp. 157-170; and M. Ebstein, 'Was Ibn Qasī a Ṣūfī?', *Studia Islamica* 110 (2015), pp. 196-232.

4   This period will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

5   For the image of ʿAlī such as it appears from the early sources attributed to him see R. Shah-Kazemi, *Justice and Remembrance: Introducing the Spirituality of Imam ʿAli*, London, 2006.

2   The Figure of ʿAlī at the End of the Caliphal Period

For reasons that are as yet unclear, in around the 5th/11th century the legend of ʿAlī, until then mostly confined to Shiʿi circles, came to be of central importance in such mystical currents as *futuwwa* and Sufism, thus outside Shiʿism proper.[6]

The popularity of ʿAlī among the popular militias who were one of the sources of the *futuwwa*, was without doubt due to his widespread reputation as a warrior. ʿAlī was seen as the archetype of the *fatā*, the young man who combined in his person the virile and chivalric qualities of courage, generosity, modesty, etc., an image summed up in the famous words associated with one of the most decisive battles of early Islam: 'there is no *fatā* but ʿAlī, no sword but the *Dhū l-faqār*'.[7]

In Sufism, emphasis was placed upon another aspect of the figure of ʿAlī: his privileged role as the possessor of mystic knowledge and the bearer of the prophetic message. While references to ʿAlī as the source of initiatory knowledge can already be found in early Sufism, in fact since the 5th/11th century, it was thanks to the creation of the Sufi orders that the role of ʿAlī became of central importance. From that moment on, nearly all of them have traced their chains of initiation (*silsila*) back to the Prophet through ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib.[8]

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6   *Futuwwa*, from *fatā*, pl. *fityān*, 'young man' in Arabic, is a complex phenomenon that varies in character in differing historical and geographical contexts. *Futuwwa* can mean a paramilitary group, a chivalric ethical code associated, or not, with Sufism, or the professional guilds, which are organized along lines similar to those of Sufi brotherhoods. See Cl. Cahen and Fr. Taeschner, 'Futuwwa', *EI2*, and L. Ridgeon, 'Futuwwa (in Ṣūfism)', *EI3*. For a more detailed study of *futuwwa* and similar groups in the socio-political history of Islam, see Cl. Cahen, 'Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie musulmane du moyen âge', *Arabica* 5/3 (1958), pp. 225-250; 6/1 (1959), pp. 25-56; 6/3 (1959), pp. 233-265 (especially the third part).

7   *Lā fatā illā ʿAlī, lā sayf illā Dhū l-faqār*. For the first part of this sentence, see Muḥammad Jaʿfar Mahjub, 'Chivalry and Early Persian Sufism', L. Lewisohn (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism*, vol. 1, Oxford, 1999, pp. 549-582, p. 554. For the complete text, attributed either to Prophet Muḥammad or to a supernatural voice during the battle of Uḥud (3/624), see C. Heger, 'Yā muḥammad – kein "oh Muḥammad", und wer ist ʿAlī?', *Schlaglichter: die beiden ersten islamischen Jahrhunderte*, M. Groß and K.-H. Ohlig (eds.), Berlin, 2005, pp. 278-292, p. 286. For the references to Shiʿi sources, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, '"Le combattant du *taʾwīl*": un poème de Mollā Ṣadrā sur ʿAlī (aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine IX)', *Journal Asiatique* 292.1-2 (2004), pp. 331-359, p. 334 n. 12.

8   Again, the reason for this phenomenon is not clear. The first Sufi *silsilas* did not necessarily all go back to ʿAlī. For examples see R. Gramlich, *Die schiitischen Derwischorden Persiens*, Wiesbaden, 1976, vol. 2, p. 171 ff.; J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Oxford, 1971, pp. 261-263. See also Sh. Pāzūkī, 'Taṣawwuf-i ʿalawī: guftārī dar bāb-i intisāb-i salāsil-i ṣūfiyya ba ḥaḍrat-i ʿAlī', *Faṣlnāma-yi andīsha-yi dīnī dānishgāh-i Shīrāz* 2/1-2 (2001), pp. 59-74. It is possible that the general adoption of the image of ʿAlī as the leading figure of initiatory knowledge in Islam was partially due to the influence of *futuwwa* on Sufism. It is true that

In the 5th/11th and 6th/12th centuries the *futuwwa* became an important military power in Muslim cities. At the same time, Sufism underwent an important transformation. Initially a movement of ascetics and contemplatives absorbed in a spiritual quest for individual perfection, regardless of any social or political context, it gradually became a highly structured organisation, subject to strict discipline under the authority of a shaykh and exerting enormous influence on society at large. Two apparently unrelated, but contemporary factors caused this transformation: the formation of the Sufi orders and the growth of popular cults of saints around the Sufi shaykhs. This radical growth of the social importance of the Sufi orders and of individual Sufi shaykhs brought them to the attention of caliphs and sultans, for whom Sufism henceforth became a credible source of authority which they could use to consolidate their position in society and to legitimise their power.[9]

The values of the *futuwwa*, understood as a code of martial honour, had been adopted by Sufism at an early stage.[10] But it is not certain that this Sufi interpretation of the *futuwwa* was at first in any way linked to the paramilitary organisations of that name.[11] The rapprochement between the militias and Sufism was consolidated and institutionalised as part of an audacious project of universal *futuwwa* undertaken by one of the last Abbasid caliphs, al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh (r. 575/1180-622/1225). Al-Nāṣir's

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the Naqshbandiyya, an extremely powerful and politically active Sufi order, were a notable exception to this rule, given that their main initiatory chain goes back to the Prophet through Abū Bakr and not through ʿAlī. However, two other Naqshbandi initiatory chains go back to ʿAlī in the same way as other Sufi orders. For the Naqshbandi initiatory chains, see for example I. Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya: Orthodoxy and Activism in a Worldwide Sufi Tradition*, London and New York, 2007, p. 23. Even if the sharing of the paths of transmission of initiatory knowledge between Abū Bakr and ʿAlī diminishes the centrality of ʿAlī, he and the other members of the prophetic family (*ahl al-bayt*) always had an important place in the foundational texts of Naqshbandi doctrine. For example, the *Fasl al-khiṭāb* of Muḥammad Pārsā (d. 822/1419) contains many sections devoted to ʿAlī, the prophetic family and the twelve Imāms. See K.M. Pārsā, *Faṣl al-khiṭāb*, Jalīl Misgarnizhād (ed.), Tehran 1381/[2002-2003]. Certain passages in the Letters (*Maktūbāt*) of Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624), founder of the Mujaddidi branch of the Naqshbandiyya, show there is a symmetrical relationship between Abū Bakr and ʿAlī: they exemplify two different types of divine attraction; or two different sorts of contemplative practice, one leading to knowledge (ʿAlī), the other leading to love (Abū Bakr). See A.F. Buehler, *Revealed Grace: The Juristic Sufism of Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624)*, Louisville (KY), 2011, p. 138 and 154.

9   For the factors that determined the transformation of Sufism into a social and political force, and for examples of narratives of the legitimation of political power by the Sufi shaykhs, see Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, Edinburgh, 2007, pp. 143-155.

10   For references, see L. Ridgeon, "Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib in Medieval Persian Sufi-*Futuwwat* Treatises', in Amir-Moezzi *et al.* (eds.), *L'ésotérisme shīʿite*, pp. 665-685, pp. 667-668.

11   These organisations were also described by terms such as *ʿayyārūn, aḥdāth* etc. See Cl. Cahen, 'Mouvements populaires'.

project was to unite all the individual *futuwwa* groups in Baghdad into a single uni-
fied *futuwwa* under the authority of the caliph, and then to apply its principles to the
broader caliphate, by recruiting prominent figures and sultans governing in his name
into this one institution. In the execution of this project, al-Nāṣir was advised by sev-
eral Sufi masters, the most famous among them being Abū Hafs ʿUmar Suhrawardī
(m. 632/1234), who had given his name to the powerful Suhrawardiyya brotherhood.
The *futuwwa* of al-Nāṣir thus had much in common with a Sufi order, the caliph being
in the place of the shaykh, the supreme spiritual guide to whom all his vassals owed
absolute obedience, in the same way as the disciples of a Sufi order. Al-Nāṣir's project
of universal *futuwwa* in this way triggered an osmosis of the values and the organisa-
tional principles of the *futuwwa* and of the Sufi orders.[12]

Al-Nāṣir's initiative was also decisive in establishing the figure of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib as
the undisputed founder of the *futuwwa*. Al-Nāṣir concocted a genealogical link with
ʿAlī, cast himself in the role of ʿAlī's heir and emulator[13] and sought to strengthen his
authority as Caliph by linking it to the conception of spiritual authority inherent in
Sufism. While the effectiveness of this project can be questioned, it arguably marked
a turning point whereby the figure of ʿAlī, the archetype of both initiatory knowledge
and military valour, became the source of legitimate political power in the larger
Islamic world, well beyond the Shiʿi communities.[14]

This project of linking universal *futuwwa* to the founding figure of ʿAlī was part of
al-Nāṣir's broader plan to reconcile and unite all the factions in Muslim society, and
in particular the Shiʿis and the Sunnis. Establishing himself as the legitimate caliph

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12   On al-Nāṣir and his project of universal *futuwwa*, see A. Hartmann, 'al-Nāṣir Li-Dīn
      Allāh', *EI2*, and her *an-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh (1180-1225). Politik, Religion, Kultur in der späten
      ʿAbbāsidenzeit*, Berlin and New York 1975; E. Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition:
      ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods*, Leiden and Boston,
      2008, pp. 271 ff.

13   A. Hartmann, 'al-Nāṣir'. The idea that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was the founder and the sole source
      of *futuwwa*, and that al-Nāṣir, as his heir, was entrusted with preserving the original
      principles of this institution, is reflected in a decree promulgated by the caliphal chan-
      cellery. The text of this decree is preserved in the work of ʿAlī b. Anjab Tāj al-Dīn Ibn
      al-Sāʿī (d. 674/1276), a Baghdadi historian and contemporary of al-Nāṣir. See his *al-Jāmiʿ
      al-mukhtaṣar*, ed. Muṣṭafā Jawād, Baghdad 1353/1934, pp. 221-225. This text was reprinted
      with a German translation by P. Kahle, 'Ein Futuwwa-Erlass des Kalifen en-Nâṣir aus
      dem Jahre 604 (1207)', *Aus fünf Jahrtausenden morgenländischer Kultur: Festschrift Max
      Freiherrn von Oppenheim*, Ernst F. Weidner (ed.), Berlin 1933, pp. 52-58. For the genealogi-
      cal revision of al-Nāṣir, see A. Hartmann, 'al-Nāṣir', and her *an-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh*, p. 102,
      where there is a reference to the *Tuḥfat al-waṣāya* of another contemporary of al-Nāṣir,
      Aḥmad b. Ilyās al-Naqqāsh Khartabirtī.

14   For a general overview of the significance of the figure of ʿAlī in Sufism and *futuwwa*, see
      L. Lewisohn, "Ali ibn Abi Talib's Ethics of Mercy in the Mirror of the Persian Sufi Tradition',
      M. Ali Lakhani (ed.), *The Sacred Foundations of Justice in Islam: The Teachings of ʿAli ibn
      Abi Talib*, Vancouver, 2006, pp. 109-145.

descended from the Qurashi and Abbasid lines, the authority on legal matters, the transmitter of prophetic traditions, but also, as the descendant of ʿAlī, at the head of the *ahl al-bayt*, the head of the universal *futuwwa* transcending confessional divisions and also a Sufi shaykh, the caliph sought to have his authority recognised by all the important groups of his society.[15] It is possible that this initiative foreshadowed the rapprochement between Shiʿism and Sunnism and the emergence of the figure of ʿAlī as the universally acceptable source of religious and political legitimacy in the period following the fall of the Abbasid caliphate as a consequence of the Mongol invasions.

3   The Figure of ʿAlī in the Mystical and Messianic Doctrines of the Post-Mongol Muslim East

The fall of the Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad in the onslaught of Hülegü's armies in 656/1258 marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the Islamic world. Several events led to a further increase in the social, political and spiritual significance of the figure of ʿAlī in that period.

As discussed above, towards the end of the Abbasid caliphate the figure of ʿAlī emerged from purely Shiʿi circles as a crucial part of the effort to legitimize the political power of the Caliph. At that time the prestige of the figure of ʿAlī was promoted, on the one hand, by the Sufi orders which by that time were structurally consolidated and able to function autonomously as 'Islamic communities in miniature' under the direction of their shaykhs, who had absolute authority over their disciples and were venerated by the general population.[16] On the other hand, the significance of the figure of ʿAlī increased with the growing influence of the *futuwwa* militias. The rapprochement between Sufi orders and *futuwwa* created a combination of spiritual authority, military

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15   Al-Suhrawardī declared this ecumenical vision, which he apparently shared with the caliph, by inviting believers to love all the Companions and all the members of the prophetic family, without favouring one above the other. Thus, Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn had to be respected without any discussion of their relative virtues. See al-Suhrawardī, *Aʿlām al-hudā wa ʿaqīdat arbāb al-tuqā*, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Sayrawān (ed.), Damascus 1996, p. 83, quoted by E. Ohlander, *Sufism*, p. 269. Al-Nāṣir maintained his ties with moderate Shiʿi circles in Baghdad and with the heads of the ʿAlid networks. He had Shiʿi advisors and ministers and contributed to the restoration of Shiʿi shrines. It was also during his reign that the rapprochement with the Nizari Ismailis of Alamūt took place. Hartmann suggests that the propaganda, called the 'well-guided call' (*daʿwa hādiya*), for the religious project of al-Nāṣir could have been inspired by similar Ismaili practices. This triggered attacks by Sunni historians who accused al-Nāṣir of Shiʿi sympathies. See A. Hartmann, 'al-Nāṣir', and her article 'La conception gouvernementale du calife an-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh', *Orientalia Suecana* 22 (1973), pp. 52-61.

16   On the subject of unconditional obedience to the shaykh in Sufism see Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, pp. 117 ff.

power and social influence articulated around the mythical figure of ʿAlī perceived as the archetype of the initiated sage and the noble warrior of Islam.

Caliph al-Nāṣir recognised the power of this myth as well as the potential of the forms of organised spirituality, such as Sufism and *futuwwa*, which were associated with it, and used it brilliantly in his attempt to reorganise the caliphate. Incorporating some of their principles into the conception of the caliphate, al-Nāṣir enhanced the political importance of these forms of spirituality and at the same time institutionalised the figure of ʿAlī as one of the symbols of religious and political authority in Islam.

The end of the Abbasid caliphate had created particularly favourable conditions for the development of diverse mystical groups and movements that claimed some connection with ʿAlī. The following factors most probably contributed to the rise of the cult of ʿAlī in mystic and messianic circles after the destitution of the last caliph of Baghdad.

First, the absence of the caliph had deprived the Islamic community of the traditional source of legitimate political power. The Muslim population of the Ilkhanate (the Mongol realm in Islamic lands) was governed for a relatively short time by Ilkhanid rulers who were Mongols and non-Muslims. After the conversion of the Ilkhanids to Islam, and especially after their disappearance from the scene, political power returned to powerful Muslim dynasties. Mostly of Turkic and Mongol descent, with no ties to the prophetic family or other links to the origins of Islam, these dynasties needed proofs of legitimacy to make their government acceptable in the eyes of the Muslim population. In the absence of a caliph, the great Sufi masters whose spiritual lineages, as we have seen, all went back to ʿAlī, were one of the principal sources of legitimacy. Not only could they extend their charisma, the sign of divine friendship, to a holder of political power but, thanks to their vast social influence, they could also provide the ruler with popular support. Thus, the Timurids, the powerful Turco-Mongol dynasty who controlled most of the territory of the Ilkhanate after the collapse of Mongol power, were intimately linked to Sufis of the Naqshbandi order. This practice of association with a Sufi order (Naqshbandis, Shaṭṭāris, Chishtis) was maintained by their successors, the Mughal rulers.[17] Their bond with mystical circles is part and parcel of the Ottoman founding myths, whilst the Safavid dynasty in Iran also grew out of a Sufi order.[18]

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17   On the ties between the Timurids and the Naqshbandis, which also contributed to the increase in political power of the latter, see H. Algar, 'Naḳshbandiyya' and 'Aḥrār', *EI2*.

18   One of the Ottoman foundational myths establishes a link between Osman, the founder of the Ottoman dynasty, and the dervish Edebali. The dervish interpreted the dream of Osman and predicted that Osman's descendants would dominate the entire world. Osman married the daughter of the dervish, thus consolidating his bond with the mystical milieus. This story can be found in the *Tavārīkh-i Āl-i ʿOthmān* of ʿAshiqpāshāzāda, a famous Ottoman historian of the 9th/15th century. See, for example, C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, New York, 2002, p. 124.

Secondly, the post-Mongol period was marked by a rapprochement between Sufism and Shiʿism, principally with its Twelver and Ismaili branches, where the cult of ʿAlī was strongest. In Twelver Shiʿism, it was the time of the rediscovery of the esoteric doctrines of early Shiʿism, after a long period of domination by juridical Shiʿism.[19] This rediscovery was accompanied by the appropriation of Sufi doctrines, especially of the monumental work of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240). These Sufi doctrines are considered by Shiʿi thinkers to derive from the teachings of the Shiʿi Imāms. As a result, Twelver thinkers of Bahrain like ʿAlī b. Sulaymān (d. ca. 672/1273) and Mītham al-Baḥrānī (d. 689/1290), followed by the Iranian Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. after 787/1385), reinterpreted Ibn ʿArabī's messianic doctrine of the 'seals' of prophecy (*nubuwwa*) and of the saint-hood (*walāya*). They contested Ibn ʿArabī's opinion that the seal of universal sainthood is Jesus and ascribed this role to ʿAlī instead.[20]

The Nizari Ismailis associated themselves with Sufism after the destruction of the Ismaili fortresses in Northern Iran by the Mongol armies in the middle of the 7th/13th century. Nizari Ismailism combined devotion to ʿAlī and the Imams with a doctrine of Resurrection (*qiyāma*), a messianic doctrine which, together with similar doctrines developed within Sufism, probably contributed to the growth of mystical and messianic movements in the post-Mongol era.[21]

Some elements ordinarily associated with Shiʿism, such as devotion to ʿAlī and to the twelve Imāms, were progressively adopted by the Sufis, and notably by such influential Sufi orders of the Mongol and post-Mongol period as the Kubrawis or the

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19   On the domination of the juridical current in Twelver Shiʿism after the major occultation of the 12th Imam, which occurred in 329/940, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, Introduction, pp. 15-47 and Appendix, pp. 319-335; also M.A. Amir-Moezzi and Ch. Jambet, *Qu'est-ce que le shiʿisme?*, pp. 181-239.

20   On the school of Bahrain, see Ali al-Oraibi, 'Shīʿī Renaissance: A Case Study of the Theosophical School of Bahrain in the 7th/13th Century', doctoral thesis, McGill University, Montreal 1992, especially pp. 172-217; and his 'Rationalism in the School of Bahrain: A Historical Perspective', *Shīʿite Heritage*, L. Clarke (ed.), Binghamton (NY) 2001, pp. 331-343. On Ḥaydar Āmulī, see H. Corbin, *En islam iranien*, vol. 3, pp. 198 ff.

21   On the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Nizārī Ismailis, see N. Tusi, *La convocation d'Alamut: Rawdat al-taslim*, French translation by Jambet with an introduction and notes by the translator, Lagrasse, 1996; the English translation of the same work by Jalal Badakhchani, entitled *Paradise of Submission: A Medieval Treatise on Ismaili Thought*, London, 2005; and J. Badakhchani, *Spiritual Resurrection in Shiʿi Islam: An Early Ismaili Treatise on the Doctrine of Qiyāmat. A new Persian edition and English translation of the* Haft bāb *by Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd-i Kātib*, London, 2017. On the possible links between the Ismaili doctrine of Resurrection and the post-Mongol mystico-messianic movements, see O. Mir-Kasimov, 'The Nizārī Ismaili Theory of the Resurrection (*Qiyāma*) and Post-Mongol Iranian Messianism,' in *Intellectual Interactions in Islamic World: The Ismaili Thread*, O. Mir-Kasimov (ed.), I.B. Tauris (Shiʿi Heritage) in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, 2019, pp. 323-352.

Niʿmatullāhis. The figure of ʿAlī has an important place in the initiatory chains of these orders, as well as in their doctrines.[22]

This rapprochement between Sufism and Shiʿism, stimulated by the project of al-Nāṣir, took place within the more general context of the rapprochement between Shiʿism and Sunnism from the 7th/13th century on. Expression of deep respect for, and admiration of, the prophetic family became the norm in Sunni Islam at that time and, reciprocally, Shiʿi authors began to refer favourably to the first three caliphs.[23] In contemporary scholarship, this phenomenon is referred to by such terms as "Alid loyalism' (Marshall Hodgson), 'Twelver Sunnism' (*tasannun-i davāzdah imāmī*) (Rasūl Jaʿfariyān), 'confessional ambiguity' (John Woods), 'Shiʿi-Sunnism or imamophilism' (Matthew Melvin-Koushki). It is worth noting that the Sunni descendants of ʿAlī also contributed to this.[24] Moreover, ʿAlī's descendants, the sharīfs and sayyids, were a separate social group with its own structure and leaders, and that too played an important political role, especially in the Maghreb, as we shall see.

Another area where Shiʿism and Sunnism met and influenced each other was that of the occult sciences such as astrology, alchemy, numerology and the science of letters (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*). These sciences are traditionally associated with the prophetic family, and more specifically with ʿAlī, Fāṭima and the Shiʿi Imāms descended from them. This cult of the prophetic family, dominated by the figure of ʿAlī, the supreme authority on occult knowledge, deeply impregnated Sunni occultist circles.[25] Individual thinkers

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22 These orders were founded by Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 617/1220) and Shāh Niʿmat Allāh Walī (d. 834/1430-1431) respectively. On the 'Shiʿi' elements among the Kubrawis, see Marijan Molé, 'Les Kubrawiya entre sunnisme et shiisme aux huitième et neuvième siècle de l'hégire', *Revue des Études Islamiques* 29 (1961), pp. 61-142. While Shāh Niʿmat Allāh Walī was himself most probably not Shiʿi, the Niʿmatullāhiyya became a Shiʿi Sufi order in the course of its history and is today the most popular Sufi order in Iran. See Hamid Algar, 'Niʿmat-Allāhiyya', *EI2*.

23 This is mostly observed in the literature dedicated to the virtues (*faḍāʾil, manāqib*) of the members of the prophetic family, including ʿAlī and the twelve Imāms. For references to authors and works, see M. Melvin-Koushki, 'The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of Ṣāʾin al-Dīn Turka Iṣfahānī (1369-1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran', doctoral thesis, Yale University, 2012, p. 74 and footnote 146; and Rasūl Jaʿfariyān, *Tārīkh-i tashayyuʿ dar Irān az āghāz tā ṭulūʿ-i dawlat-i ṣafavī*, Tehran 1388/[2009-2010], pp. 840-850.

24 Kazuo Morimoto has studied the case of a Sunni scholar from the 9th/15th from the Hasanid branch of the prophetic family who claimed that, in the field of Sunni jurisprudence, scholars belonging to the prophetic family are superior to those who have no ties with that family. See K. Morimoto, 'The Prophet's Family as the Perennial Source of Saintly Scholars: al-Samhūdī on *ʿilm* and *nasab*', in C. Mayeur-Jaouen and A. Papas (eds.), *Family Portraits with Saints: Hagiography, Sanctity, and Family in the Muslim World*, Berlin 2014, pp. 106-124.

25 For the veneration of ʿAlī and the prophetic family in Sunni occultist circles of the 7th/13th centuries, see M.A. Masad, 'The Medieval Islamic Apocalyptic Tradition: Divination,

and intellectual networks with an interest in occult sciences played an important role in the formation of political theories and imperial ideologies during the post-caliphal period, so bringing their deep respect for ʿAlī and the prophetic family into the political arena.[26]

An example which illustrates the importance of the figure of ʿAlī as a source of universal political legitimacy during the post-caliphal period is provided by an inscription on the tomb of Tamerlane (d. 806/1405), the renowned Turco-Mongol conqueror and one of the most powerful Muslim rulers of his time. This inscription modifies the genealogy of Tamerlane to make him a descendant of ʿAlī.[27]

The third factor which favoured the promotion of the figure of ʿAlī in the post-Mongol period is the rise of mystico-messianic movements with eclectic doctrines, in which Sufi and Shiʿi elements were so closely intertwined that it became impossible to distinguish between them. ʿAlī has consequently an important place in the doctrines of almost all these movements.

The Sarbadār movement was the earliest of its kind to leave a significant trace in the historical record.[28] It began as an ostensibly secular rebellion against the tax policies

Prophecy and the End of Time in the 13th Century Eastern Mediterranean', PhD thesis, Washington University, Saint Louis (MO), 2008; for the later period (8th/14th-9th/15th centuries), see M. Melvin-Koushki, 'The Quest', especially pp. 69-77.

26　See the PhD thesis and many articles by Matthew Melvin-Koushki; as well as Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī and the Islamicate Republic of Letters*, Cambridge 2016. Sunni approach to occult sciences, as evidenced by the work of prominent thinkers such as Ṣāʾin al-Dīn Turka Iṣfahānī (d. 836/1432), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Basṭāmī (d. 858/1454) and Jalāl al-Dīn Davānī (d. 908/1502) are arguably more rational than mystical. They do not necessarily rely upon a metaphysical link with the source of divine knowledge, which is essential to all forms of mysticism. It is also worth noting that in works on the classification of the sciences, the occult sciences are found either in the category of natural sciences or in that of mathematical sciences. See M. Melvin-Koushki, 'Powers of One: The Mathematicalization of the Occult Sciences in the High Persianate Tradition', *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 5 (2017), pp. 127-199. Of course, this 'scientific' dimension did not prevent the occult sciences from being also present in mystical doctrines.

27　This genealogy can also be found in other historical sources from that period. See John E. Woods, 'Timur's Genealogy', *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera Moreen (eds.), Salt Lake City, 1990, pp. 85-125, p. 88. For a different ʿAlid genealogy of the Timurids (through Muḥammad b. al-Hanafiyya), see K. Morimoto, 'An Enigmatic Genealogical Chart of the Timurids: A Testimony to the Dynasty's Claim to Yasavi-ʿAlid Legitimacy?', *Oriens* 44 (2016), pp. 145-178.

28　The works of Ḥāfiẓ Abrū (d. 833/1430) are the main sources on the Sarbadārs. For a detailed discussion of the sources, see Yaʿqūb Āzhand, *Qiyām-i Shīʿī-yi Sarbadārān*, Tehran 1363 s.n./1985, pp. 41-71. See also J. Aubin, 'La fin de l'état Sarbadār du Khorassan', *Journal Asiatique* 263 (1974), pp. 95-118; Id., 'Aux origines d'un mouvement populaire medieval: Le cheykhisme du Bayhaq et du Nichâpour', *Studia Iranica* 5/2, 1976, pp. 213-24; J. Masson Smith, *The History of the Sarbadār Dynasty*, The Hague and Paris, 1970; D. Aigle,

of the last Ilkhans. The Sarbadārs were later joined in it by Sufi dervishes led by the Shaykh Khalīfa and Shaykh Ḥasan Jūrī, who brought a more mystical dimension to the movement. It is difficult to evaluate what exact role the figure of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib played in the doctrines of these dervishes, since none of their doctrinal texts have survived.[29] But it is very likely that both the dervishes and the Sarbadār were to some extent influenced by popular Shiʿism and its messianic expectations.[30] We also know that the last Sarbadār leader, ʿAlī Muʾayyad (d. 788/1386), invited a prominent representative of legalist Twelver Shiʿism, Muḥammad b. Makkī al-ʿĀmilī (d. 786/1384), to establish an 'official' form of Shiʿism in the Sarbadār state. This link with Shiʿism suggests that the figure of ʿAlī had an important place in the beliefs of the Sarbadār.

In the work of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī (d. 796/1394), a mystical and messianic thinker and founder of the influential movement known as Ḥurūfiyya, ʿAlī is the primordial Dot, the Dot containing in an undifferentiated state all possible knowledge of God as well as the entire universe with all its possibilities of future evolution. Moreover, without referring explicitly to the Shiʿi doctrine of the Imamate, Faḍl Allāh writes that ʿAlī

'Sarbedārs', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*; Shahzad Bashir, 'Between Mysticism and Messianism: The Life and Thought of Muḥammad Nūrbakš (d. 1464)', doctoral thesis, Yale University, 1997, pp. 12-34.

29 The only known document written by the founders of this dervish movement is a letter which Ḥasan Jūrī wrote to Muḥammad Bek (d. 772/1370-1371 or 774/1372-1373), head of the Jānī (or Jāʾūnī) Qurbān tribe. The text of this letter was published by Āzhand, *Qiyām* pp. 86-89. It contains little information about the doctrinal views of its author and deals mostly with the life and travels of Ḥasan Jūrī and his relations with Muḥammad Bek. The outlines of the doctrine of the dervishes proposed by J. Masson Smith (*The History*, pp. 55-89) and Yaʿqūb Āzhand (*Qiyām* pp. 76-77 and 89-92) contain questionable extrapolations and sometimes erroneous interpretations of the historical evidence. The conclusions of Smith, especially those based on the interpretation of numismatic material, have been criticised by other researchers (see H. Morton, 'The History of the Sarbadars in the light of new numismatic evidence', *Numismatic Chronicle*, 7th series, 16 (1976), pp. 255-258; S. Bashir, 'Between Mysticism and Messianism', pp. 28-34).

30 Information about the messianic tendencies of the dervishes or the Sarbadār comes mainly from two sources. One of them contains Ḥasan Jūrī's call to his supporters following the death of his predecessor, Shaykh Khalīfa, enjoining them to prepare their weapons and to be ready for the advent of the 'time of manifestation' (*vaqt-i ẓuhūr*) which will be revealed to them (Āzhand, *Qiyām*, p. 78, with reference to the *Jughrāfiyā* of Ḥāfiẓ Abrū). However, it is not clear from this passage whether or not the 'time of manifestation' has any specifically apocalyptic connotation, and no messianic figure is explicitly mentioned in this text. The second source describes a custom established by the last Sarbadār leader, when a horse was prepared and kept ready for the awaited Savior (*ṣāḥib al-zamān*) every day (S. Bashir, 'Between Mysticism and Messianism', p. 28, with reference to Mīr Khʷānd, *Tārīkh-i* rawḍat *al-ṣafāʾ*). This custom was apparently not an invention of the Sarbadār and was also practised by Shiʿi communities elsewhere, notably in Ḥilla. See S. Bashir, *ibid.*, p. 28 n. 48.

and his descendants possess the knowledge of spiritual hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*).[31] As the guardian, or rather, the ultimate personification of that knowledge, 'Alī can guide the faithful from the written word of the Quran to its deepest meaning. Hence 'Alī's title of 'the Speaking Quran'.[32] Many implicit allusions in the *Jāvidān-nāma-yi kabīr*, the main work of Faḍl Allāh, would appear to establish a parallel between the role of 'Alī and the eschatological mission of Jesus. For example, 'Alī is identified with the 'Book that speaks the Truth' of the Quranic text, and the same expression refers, in other passages, to the eschatological book sealed with seven seals which is mentioned in the Book of Revelation of John, the book which Jesus will open at the End of Time.[33] 'Alī, after Muḥammad and Adam, is also one the figures most frequently mentioned in the dream journal attributed to Faḍl Allāh.[34] Finally, the high status of 'Alī is often emphasised in the poetry attributed to the same author:[35]

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31   O. Mir-Kasimov, *Words of Power: Ḥurūfī Teachings between Shī'ism and Sufism in Medieval Islam*, London, 2015, p. 349.

32   *Al-Qur'ān al-nāṭiq*, opposed to the 'silent Quran' (*al-Qur'ān al-sāmit*). For these expressions, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*, pp. 103 ff.

33   O. Mir-Kasimov, *Words of Power*, pp. 347-348 and 376-377. Is this a sign of the resurgence of the messianic role attributed to 'Alī in the formative period of Islam? For the messianic dimension of the figure of 'Alī in early Islam and for the 'Alī/Jésus parallel, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, 'Muḥammad le Paraclet et 'Alī le Messie: nouvelles remarques sur les origines de l'islam et de l'imamologie shi'ite', *L'ésotérisme shī'ite*, pp. 19-54 (here chap. 2). However, in the *Jāvidān-nāma* of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī, it is Jesus and not 'Alī who is the main messianic figure, even if the Jesus/'Alī parallel is prominent in this work too. Other examples of the messianic dimension of the figure of 'Alī can be found in the doctrines of mystical and messianic thinkers of the post-Mongol period such as Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh or Muḥammad Ibn Falāḥ (see further below).

34   In one of his dreams, 'Alī replies to Faḍl Allāh's greeting calling him 'my brother' (*akhī*). See O. Mir-Kasimov, 'Le "journal des rêves" de Faḍlullāh Astarābādī: édition et traduction annotée', *Studia Iranica* 38 (2009), pp. 249-304, paragraph 120 (Persian text p. 277, translation pp. 295-296).

35   There is some confusion between the poetry attributed to Faḍl Allāh and that attributed to his famous disciple, 'Imād al-Dīn Nasīmī (d. 820/1417-1418), so that many poems included in the *dīvān* of Faḍl Allāh (under his pen name 'Na'īmī') can also be found in the *dīvān* of Nasīmī. On this question, see Ṣ. Kiyā, "Āgahī hā-yi tāza az ḥurūfiyān', *Majalla-yi dānishkada-yi adabiyyāt-i dānishgāh-i Tihrān*, nº 2/2 (1333/1954), pp. 39-65. However, the exact authorship is not our concern in this case. Whether this poetry was written by Faḍl Allāh himself or by one of his close disciples, it still demonstrates the august position of 'Alī in the Ḥurūfī tradition. It is true that these quatrains explicitly describe 'Alī as the locus of manifestation of God, which differs somewhat from the rather cautious language of the main work of Faḍl Allāh, the *Jāvidān-nāma-yi kabīr*. However, in his Will (*Waṣiyyat-nāma*), Faḍl Allāh compared himself to al-Ḥusayn, one of the sons of 'Alī killed by the Umayyad forces at Karbalā: 'The Ḥusayn of the Age am I, and each worthless foe a Shimr and Yazīd / My life is a day of mourning ['Āshūrā (the day of the assassination of Ḥusayn)], and Shirwān my Karbalā' (*man Ḥusayn-i waqt o nā-ahlān Yazīd o Shimr-i man / rūzgāram jumla 'Āshūrā o Shirwān[am ?] Karbalā*) (Faḍlallāh Astarābādī, *Waṣiyyat-nāma*,

> The [Quranic expression] 'Say: He is God!' refers to ʿAlī,
> ʿAlī is the supreme king in the world of knowledge,
> That universal Dot which is the origin of all particular [objects and beings]
> By God it is ʿAlī, by God, it is ʿAlī.[36]

Another example:

> The divine secret appears in the [letter] *ʿayn* of ʿAlī
> In the [letter] *lām* of ʿAlī is [contained] 'He is the Most-High, the Supreme'
> In the [letter] *yāʾ* of ʿAlī is the form of the eternal Living One
> Read and you will see that the supreme name of God is here.[37]

Faḍl Allāh very likely saw himself as a spiritual master initiated into the knowledge of the *taʾwīl* and believed that he was called upon to open a new era in the history of Islam and, no less, of mankind. During that era, spiritual truths were supposed to be gradually revealed through a hermeneutical process controlled by a special category of saints.[38] This unveiling was to culminate in the final apocalypse presided over by Jesus. The belief that the inception of this new eschatological era would bring social and political changes explains Faḍl Allāh's and his disciples' involvement in the political arena. Although their efforts to link themselves to a political power systematically failed, Faḍl Allāh's movement belonged to a mystico-messianic tendency which, as we shall see, was playing an increasingly important part in the socio-political life of the Islamic world.

In the doctrine of Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh (d. 869/1464) (he gave his name to the Nūrbakhshiyya movement), at the confluence of Twelver Shiʿism and Kubrawī Sufism,

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E. Granville Browne, 'Further notes on the literature of the Ḥurūfīs and their connection with the Bektāshī order of dervishes', *JRAS* (1907), pp. 533-581, p. 541 (Persian text), p. 542 (English translation)). The works of the immediate disciples of Faḍl Allāh explicitly mention ʿAlī and the Imāms of the Twelver line. See Sayyid Isḥāq Astarābādī, *Maḥram-nāma*, in Cl. Huart, *Textes persans relatifs à la secte des Houroûfîs*, Leiden and London, 1909, p. 21 of the Persian text.

36 *Dīvān-i fārsī-yi Faḍl Allāh Naʿīmī Tabrīzī va ʿImād al-Dīn Nasīmī Shīrvānī*, ed. Rustam Aliev, Tehran, n.d., p. 28: *Mawṣūf-i ṣifāt-i 'Qul huwa Allāh' ʿAlīst / Dar ʿālam-e maʿrifat shahanshāh ʿAlīst. Ān nuqta-ye kull ke juzw az ū peydā shud / Wa-llāh ke ān ʿAlīst, bi-llāh ʿAlīst.* This quatrain also appears in the Persian *dīvān* of Nasīmī. See Kathleen R.F. Burrill, *The Quatrains of Nesimi, Fourteenth-Century Turkic Hurufi*, The Hague and Paris, 1972, p. 244.

37 *Dīvān-i fārsī-yi Faḍl Allāh Naʿīmī Tabrīzī va ʿImād al-Dīn Nasīmī Shīrvānī*, p. 28: *Dar ʿayn-i ʿAlī sirr-i ilāhī peydāst / Dar lām-i ʿAlī 'huwa al-ʿAlī al-Aʿlāst' / Dar yāʾ-i ʿAlī ṣūrat-i ḥayy al-qayyūm / Bar-khʷān o be-bīn ke ism-i aʿẓam ānjāst [īnjāst ?].*

38 The 'maternal' saints (*ummiyūn*), according to the *Jāvidān-nāma*. On this concept, see O. Mir-Kasimov, *Words of Power*, p. 273 ff., and Glossary, 'Mother', p. 451.

'Alī is the symbol of the perfect Imamate, which combines the four following char-
acteristics: knowledge (*al-ʿilm*), divine friendship (*al-walāya*), the nobility inherent in
the prophetic lineage (*al-siyāda*), and sovereign power (*al-mamlaka*). According to
Nūrbakhsh, none of the historical Shiʿi Imams, with the exception of ʿAlī, had united all
four characteristics in their persons, since none of them had wielded political power.
The distinctive sign of the expected final Imām, the Saviour (*al-mahdī*), was that he
would himself combine all four. In this, the Saviour will be like ʿAlī, and mankind will
be united under his reign.[39] Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh believed that his mission was to
be that last Imām.[40] So he accordingly claimed political power. When his claim was
rejected by Shāhrukh (d. 850/1447), the principal successor to Tamerlane, Nūrbakhsh
abandoned the political part of his doctrine and spent the remaining part of his life as
an ordinary spiritual master in a village near Rayy.

A contemporary of Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh, Muḥammad b. Falāḥ (the founder of
the Mushaʿshaʿiyya movement, d. 870/1465-1466) was another influential messianic
thinker whose doctrines were a synthesis of Shiʿi and Sufi elements. To date his mon-
umental work *Kalām al-mahdī* ('The Word of the Saviour') has been neither edited
nor methodically studied. But despite its rather enigmatic language, even a super-
ficial reading of the *Kalām al-mahdī* reveals that the figure of ʿAlī has an important
place in the thought of Ibn Falāḥ. In this work, ʿAlī is described as 'the secret of all
the prophets';[41] as the inheritor (*waṣī*) of the Prophet and of 'the hermeneutical lan-
guage of the divine [message]'.[42] ʿAlī is thus the supreme authority of Qurʾan inter-
pretation and of the revelation of all its innermost meanings and of those of all other
sacred books.[43] ʿAlī is 'the secret governing heaven and earth',[44] whilst (the Prophet)
Muḥammad is his veil (*al-ḥijāb*).

The *Kalām al-mahdī* goes so far as to proclaim the divine nature of ʿAlī: 'The father
of al-Ḥasan and of al-Ḥusayn and the husband of Fāṭima the most pure, daughter of
the Messenger, ʿAlī is God, the Lord of the Worlds.'[45] This idea strongly influenced
one of the sons of Muḥammad ibn Falāḥ, Mawlā ʿAlī, who apparently claimed to

39   Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh, *Risālat al-hudā*, Shahzad Bashir (ed.), 'The *Risālat al-hudā* of
       Muḥammad Nūrbakš (d. 869/1464): Critical Edition with Introduction', *Rivista degli Studi
       Orientali* 75 (2001), fasc. 1-4, pp. 87-137, 118-119.

40   Ibid., p. 122.

41   *Kalām al-mahdī*, MS Majlis 10222, fol. 15b.

42   *Al-lisān al-muʿabbir ʿan Allāh taʿālā. Ibid.*, fol. 17a-b.

43   Ibid.

44   *Al-sirr al-dāʾir fī l-samāʾ wa l-arḍ. Ibid.* fol. 19a.

45   *ʿAlī abū l-Ḥasan wa l-Ḥusayn zawj Fāṭimat al-ṭuhr ibnat al-rasūl huwa Allāh rabb al-ʿālamīn,
       Ibid.* fol. 19b. The rest of this text seems to suggest that ʿAlī is the manifestation of God
       in the same way as different historical figures were the manifestations of the archan-
       gel Gabriel. This is corroborated by another passage from the *Kalām al-mahdī* quoted
       by M. Mazzaoui, 'Mushaʿshaʿiyān: A Fifteenth Century Shiʿi Movement in Khūzistān and
       Southern Iraq', *Folia Orientalia* 22 (1981-1984), pp. 139-162, p. 156.

have received the spirit of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and also to be the locus of manifestation of God. Mawlā ʿAlī invaded the city of Najaf and had the swords of his soldiers consecrated in the mausoleum of ʿAlī.[46] As to Ibn Falāḥ, he apparently claimed for himself the more modest status of the representative of the 12th Imām of the Twelver Shiʿites, that is, of the Mahdī or Qāʾim expected to appear at the end of times.[47] The mission of Ibn Falāḥ thus was to test the believers, distinguishing those who were ready to support his cause from the hypocrites and so preparing the ground for the manifestation of the Imām.[48] The *Kalām al-Mahdī* suggests that Ibn Falāḥ derived his authority as representative of the hidden Imām from his knowledge of the secrets of ʿAlī and of the Imāms, and that this knowledge conferred to him the status of the Salmān of his time.[49]

The Mushaʿshaʿ is another example of a mystical and messianic movement with the figure of ʿAlī at the core of its conception of religious authority and political legitimacy. In the second half of the 9th/15th century it succeeded founding a quasi-independent dynasty, which governed part of Khūzistān (South-West of Iran and South-East of Iraq) before becoming a vassal of the Savafids.

In Anatolia, the figure of ʿAlī has a central role in what is known as the Alevi tradition present in a large community in Turkey and elsewhere.[50] Until the 19th century the members of this community identified themselves as 'Qizilbash' (the 'red heads', a reference to their characteristic headgear decorated with twelve red or golden stripes). The name 'Alevi' reflects the primacy of the devotion to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib in the group's religious beliefs. In the end the name replaced 'Qizilbash', which had acquired some pejorative connotations.

The origins of the Alevi movement, and the different influences which contributed to its formation between the 7th/13th and 10th/16th centuries, are still the object of scholarly debate.[51] Nevertheless, whatever the origins of the different strata of Alevi beliefs might be, devotion to ʿAlī seems fundamental to Alevi identity, to the point

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46 ʿAlī Riḍā Dhakāwatī Qarāguzlū, 'Nahḍat-i Mushaʿshaʿī wa gudhārī bar *Kalām al-Mahdī*, in *Maʿārif* 37 (1375/[1996-1997]), pp. 59-67, p. 61.

47 *Kalām al-mahdī*, fol. 28a, '[God] conceals this secret [that of the 12th Imām, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, the awaited Mahdī], and manifests this *sayyid* [Muḥammad Ibn Falāḥ] to serve as a representative [of the Mahdī]' (*yukhfā hadhā al-sirr wa-yuẓhira hadhā al-sayyid bi-ḥasbi al-niyāba*). For a discussion of the claims of Ibn Falāḥ based on the *Kalām al-mahdī*, see also ʿAlī Riḍā Dhakāwatī Qarāguzlū, 'Nahḍat-i Mushaʿshaʿī', pp. 64-65.

48 ʿAlī Riḍā Dhakāwatī Qarāguzlū, 'Nahḍat-i Mushaʿshaʿī', pp. 64-65.

49 *Kalām al-mahdī*, fol. 19b. Salmān Pāk, a convert of Persian origin and a famous Companion of the Prophet was regarded as a member of the prophetic family by the latter. According to the Shiʿī tradition, he supported the cause of ʿAlī after the death of the Prophet.

50 The Alevis are an important part (15-20%) of the population of contemporary Turkey. They are also present in the Balkans, as well as in Western countries. See M. Dressler, 'Alevīs', *EI3*.

51 For the references and a detailed bibliography, see M. Dressler, 'Alevīs'.

where the Alevi worldview may be called a true 'religion of 'Alī.'[52] This exceptional status of 'Alī as the pre-existential locus of manifestation of the knowable aspect of God is abundantly reflected in Alevi ritual and literature.

For instance, the main Alevi initiatory rite, *āyin-i cem*, is in essence a reenactment of the story of the 'assembly of the Forty' (*kırklar cemi*) which the Prophet Muḥammad attended on his return from his ascension to heaven. The story of the assembly and of the ascension that preceded it strongly suggests the preeminence of 'Alī over Muḥammad and 'Alī's exceptional nearness to God. The lion which Muḥammad encountered at the beginning of his ascension and to whom he gave his ring turns out to be 'Alī; of the ninety thousand words that Muḥammad exchanged with God, sixty thousand remain hidden with 'Alī (*Ali'de sırroldu*); at the end of the assembly, Muḥammad acknowledged 'Alī to be the spiritual master (*pīr*) of the Forty and bowed down before him with the other participants.[53]

Their love of 'Alī and of the twelve Imāms and their hatred for their opponents are also abundantly reflected in Alevi poetry. The following extract from a poem by Abdal Musa (8th/14th century) illustrates this:

> May your eyes become blind, oh bloody Yazīd!
> There is none other than 'Alī on this path.
> There are no Imāms other than 'Alī
> Who opens the door of the twelve Imāms
> Is there anyone other than 'Alī
> Who would be superior to all the saints?[54]

52　The expression *dīn 'Alī* is very old. According to M.A. Amir-Moezzi, it is a fundamental concept of the original Shi'i faith. See M.A. Amir-Moezzi, 'Considérations sur l'expression *dīn 'Alī*: aux origines de la foi Shi'ite', *ZDMG* 150 (2000), pp. 29-68; reprinted in Idem, *La religion discrète*, pp. 19-47 (here chap. 3). The Alevis belong to the category of religious groups referred to by the common name "Alī ilāhī' (those who deify 'Alī) in Iran. This name probably stems from a belief rooted in early Shi'ism, according to which the cosmic Imām, personified by 'Alī and the imāms his descendants, was considered to be the locus of manifestation of the divine names and attributes. On the idea of cosmic Imām in early Shi'ism see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le guide divin*, pp. 73-154.

53　See, for example, *Buyruk: İmam Cafer-i Sadık Buyruğu*, ed. Fuat Bozkurt, Istanbul, 2013, pp. 15-21. At the same time, the essential identity of Muḥammad and 'Alī as aspects of one pre-existential divine light is also emphasised in the Alevi tradition. For early Shi'i sources mentioning the unity of Muḥammad and 'Alī within the original divine light see U. Rubin, 'Pre-existence and light: Aspects of the concept Nūr Muḥammad', *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975), pp. 62-119; and M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, pp. 73-112. For the Alevi interpretation of this unity, where the pre-existential relationship between Muḥammad and 'Alī becomes the prototype of another important Alevi ritual, the *musahiplik*, see *Buyruk*, pp. 235-238.

54　I.Z. Eyuboğlu, *Alevi-Bektaşi edebiyatı*, Istanbul, 1991, pp. 106-107: '*Gözlerin kör olsun ey kanlu Yezid \ Bu meydanda ne var Aliden gayri \ Oniki İmamın kapısın açan \ İmamlar*

In the 10th/16th and the 11th/17th centuries, the Alevis relationship with the Bektashis, one of the most influential mystical orders of Ottoman Empire grew stronger.[55] This rapprochement resulted in the structural and doctrinal interpenetration of these two Anatolian esoteric traditions.[56] Consequently, the figure of ʿAlī as a source of initiatory knowledge and as an archetype of the spiritual master became one of the central tenets of Bektashi doctrine.[57] Other possible reasons for the consolidation of the ʿAlī's cults of the Alevis and the Bektashis seem to have been the associations of *akhīs*, the Anatolian version of the *futuwwa*;[58] and the growing influence of the doctrines of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī which, from the second half of the 9th/15th century onwards, became widespread in Anatolia, especially within the Bektashi order.[59] The prominence of the figure of ʿAlī among the Bektashis is clearly visible in the visual art of that order, which has many images on which the calligraphied name of ʿAlī is incorporated into the human body and face.[60]

The Safavid movement, which grew out of an Iranian Sufi order founded by Ṣafī al-Dīn Ardabīlī (d. 735/1334), forged strong links with Anatolian movements from the 9th/15th century. Shaykh Junayd (d. 864/1460) recruited many followers from the Turkoman tribes of Anatolia, the 'red heads' (Qizilbash) mentioned above, and they eventually became the main military support of the Safavid movement. According to a legend, it was the son of Junayd, Shaykh Ḥaydar (d. 893/1488), who introduced the headgear with twelve red stripes (the *tāj*) to his disciples, after ʿAlī ordered him to do so in a dream.[61] This dream established ʿAlī as the patron saint of the Safavids and identified them as fighters for his cause.

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degildir Aliden gayri ... \ ... Cümle evliyalar üstünden geçen \ Var mıdır hiçbir er Aliden gayri.' Yazīd I (r. 61-64 / 680-683), the second Umayyad caliph under whose rule the tragedy of Karbalāʾ took place and the Prophet's grandson al-Ḥusayn was killed.

55 On the Bektashis, see J. Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, London, 1937; A. Popovic and G. Veinstein (eds.), *Bektachiyya: Études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groups relevant de Hadji Bektach*, Istanbul, 1995.

56 Because of this interpenetration these two traditions are often referred to in scholarly literature by the common name of 'Alevism/Bektashism'.

57 J. Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order*, p. 36, pp. 132-145.

58 M. Dressler, 'Alevīs'.

59 On the relationships between the Ḥurūfīs and the Bektashis, see J. Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order*, pp. 58-62 et 148-158.

60 This iconography was, at least in part, inspired by the Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī's work, according to which the human body and face are the loci of manifestation *par excellence* of the divine Word and of all the ontological 'letters' contained in the Word. The reference to Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī's work would seem to be confirmed by the Bektashi images including the calligraphied words 'Faḍl Allāh' (the name of the founder of the Ḥurūfī movement meaning 'Bounty of God') on the human face. See here chap. 9, fig. 4.

61 See A. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire*, London, 2009, p. 14 and footnote 2 pp. 150-151.

So the Safavid movement placed itself at the confluence of the Iranian mystico-messianic tradition (movements such as the Ḥurūfīs, the Nūrbakhshīs and the Mushaʿshaʿ) and of Anatolian popular mysticism. The strengthening of the link between the religious authority of a divinely inspired spiritual master and political authority, which was making headway in both Iranian and Anatolian mystical traditions and which was partially implemented in the Sarbadār and Mushaʿshaʿ states, culminated in the person of Shaykh Ismāʿīl Safavi (d. 930/1524), the founder of the Safavid Empire. On the strength of his authority as the head of a Sufi order and of his charisma as a descendant of ʿAlī, Shaykh Ismāʿīl led the Qizilbash tribes, who regarded him as their spiritual master, to the conquest of a vast territory and became the first Shāh of a dynasty that reigned until the 11th/17th century.[62]

The figure of ʿAlī is omnipresent in the poetry attributed to Shāh Ismāʿīl:

> ʿAlī is the Sea of Truth, he is the eternal life of honour.[63]
> Those who do not recognise ʿAlī is Truth are absolute unbelievers,
> They have no creed, no faith, and are not Muslims.[64]

The figure of ʿAlī would appear to be of central importance to the creation of Shāh Ismāʿīl's personal charisma, both in his understanding of his spiritual mission and in legitimizing his political ambitions that is his right to govern the Islamic community. If Minorsky's interpretation of the following poetry is correct, it contains an idea very close to the 'religion of ʿAlī' as the foundation of religious and political authority claimed by Shāh Ismāʿīl:

> O, fighters in the path of God, say: 'God, God!' I am the faith of the Shāh (*dīn-i shāh*) [i.e., faith of ʿAlī][65]
> Come to meet (me), prostrate yourselves. I am the faith of the Shāh …

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62   For the Safavid claim of an ʿAlid lineage, and for a lucid discussion of the sources and studies concerning this question see K. Morimoto, 'The Earliest ʿAlid Genealogy for the Safavids: New Evidence for the Pre-dynastic Claim to *Sayyid* Status', *Iranian Studies* 43/4 (2010), pp. 447-469.

63   V. Minorsky, 'The Poetry of Shāh Ismāʿīl I', *BSOAS* 10/4 (1942), pp. 1006a-1053a, nº 7, p. 1030a: *ʿAlī baḥr-i ḥaqīqat dūr yaqīn bīl/ Ḥayāt-i jāvidān-i muʿtabar dūr*; English translation p. 1042a.

64   Minorsky, 'The Poetry', nº 194, p. 1036a: *ʿAlīʾnī ḥaqq bīlmiyanlar kāfir-i muṭlaq olūr / Dīnī yokh īmānī yokh ol nā-musulmān dūr*; English translation p. 1047a.

65   This is Minorsky's interpretation. It appears to be more convincing if we consider the last line of the same poem, where Shāh Ismāʿīl more explicitly links the 'essence of ʿAlī' with the 'religion of the Shāh'. 'The Poetry', nº 18, p. 1043a, Minorsky's translation slightly modified. It is also possible to read this expression as *dīn-Shāh*, 'the King of the religion [of ʿAlī]'. My thanks to Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi for having pointed out the possibility of such reading.

I am Khaṭāʾī[66] … I have the essence of Murtaḍā ʿAlī. I am the faith of the Shāh.[67]

I belong to the religion (madhhab) of the 'Adherents of the Walī (i.e., ʿAlī)' (mawālī)[68] and on the Shāh's path

I am a guide to everyone who says: 'I am a Muslim'.[69]

Finally, it should be mentioned that several founders of mystical and messianic movements of the time claimed an ʿAlid genealogy or were given one posthumously by their followers.[70]

4   ʿAlī, Fāṭima and Their Descendants in the Maghreb

In the west, the Maghreb, the historical context was very different from in the eastern part of the Islamic world. As we saw above, in the East, the figure of ʿAlī began to gain influence outside strictly Shiʿi circles from the 5th/11th century onwards; but it was apparently the Mongol invasions of the 7th/13th century and the fall of the caliph of Baghdad that consolidated the image of ʿAlī as one of the main sources of religious and political authority.

The Maghreb was less affected by the Mongol invasions. Because of its geographical remoteness from the central lands of Islam, and also because of the struggles of the newly converted Berber tribes against Arab supremacy, the Maghreb harboured

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66   Pen name of Shāh Ismāʿīl.

67   'The Poetry', nº 18, p. 1032a: *Allāh Allāh deyin ghāzīlar dīn-i shāh manam / Qārshū galūn sajda qīlūn ghāzīlar dīn-i shāh manam … Khaṭāʾīam … Murtaḍa ʿAlī dhātlūyam ghāzīlar dīn-i shāh manam.* English translation p. 1043a.

68   This is Minorsky's interpration of the term *muwālī* (or *mawālī*) in this verse, 'The Poetry', nº 195, p. 1047a. I was unable to consult a complete copy of Shāh Ismāʿīl's *Dīwān* to either confirm or deny this interpretation.

69   *Mawālī madhhabam shāhūn yolunda / 'Musulmanam' diyāne rahbaram man*, 'The Poetry', p. 1037a. On the poetry attributed to Shāh Ismāʿīl under his pen name Khaṭaʾī, see also Ahmet T. Karamustafa, 'In his own voice: what Hatayı tells us about Şah İsmail's religious views', Amir-Moezzi *et al.* (eds.), *L'ésotérisme shīʿite*, pp. 601-611.

70   The ʿAlid genealogy of the Safavids has been mentioned above. The genealogy of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī, the founder of the Ḥurūfī movement, is found in the works of his disciples, such as the *Risāla* of Mīr Fāḍilī (ms. Istanbul, Ali Emiri Farsça 1039, fol. 8b, 30b), and the *Ṣalāt-nāma* of Ishqurt Dada (ms. Istanbul, Ali Emiri Farsça 1043, fol. 51a). See Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı, *Hurûfîlik metinleri kataloğu*, Ankara 1989, p. 4. According to some sources, the father of Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh, the eponym of the Nūrbakhshī movement, was a descendant of ʿAlī. See Bashir, 'Between Mysticism and Messianism', p. 88, with a reference to the *Majālis al-muʾminīn* of Qāḍī Nūr Allāh Shūshtarī (d. 1019/1610). The same source contains the ʿAlid genealogy of Muḥammad Ibn Falāḥ, the founder of the Mushaʿshaʿ movement. See M. Mazzaoui, 'Mushaʿshaʿiyān', p. 143. It is worth noting that all these lineages go through Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799).

movements and political structures based on conceptions of legitimacy different from, and often rival, to those of the Oriental caliphs, the Umayyads and then the Abbasids. The figure of ʿAlī is arguably less potent in Maghrebi Islam, but the lineage of ʿAlī, and especially his descendants through Fāṭima, played a major role in the formulation of ideas of legitimacy in the Maghreb. Moreover, the doctrine of direct access to the source of divine knowledge and the idea of infallibility closely associated with it, were central to the paradigms of religious and political authority there. Even if these paradigms did not always explicitly mention the name of ʿAlī, we know that for some important spiritual currents of Islam, such as Shiʿism, Sufism or *futuwwa*, ʿAlī symbolises initiatory knowledge and the infallibility flowing from this knowledge.

Two Maghrebi kingdoms were directly founded on the Shiʿi doctrine of ʿAlid/Fāṭimid legitimacy. The first one was the Idrissid state of Morocco, which existed between 172/789 and 375/985. The founder of the dynasty, Idrīs b. ʿAbd Allāh (d. 175/791), was a descendant of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and Fāṭima bt. Muḥammad through their son al-Ḥasan. He was also the brother of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, who rebelled against the Abbasid power in 145/ 762-763. Idrīs b. ʿAbd Allāh most probably shared with his brother the surname al-Fāṭimī, 'the Fāṭimid'.[71] Significantly, his son and successor Idrīs II (d. 213/828) founded a city named al-ʿAliyya, 'the city of ʿAlī', near Fez, which had been founded by his father.[72] The name of ʿAlī also appeared on coins minted at the time of Idrīs.[73] It is noteworthy that many Sufi leaders and messianic rebels in North Africa claimed to have an Idrissid pedigree.[74]

The second Maghrebi kingdom to rely on the legitimacy of the ʿAlid/Fāṭimid line of descent was the Fāṭimid empire (4th/10th-6th/13th c.) founded by Ismaili Shiʿis. Unlike the Idrissids, the Fāṭimids did not trace their descent to al-Ḥasan, but to al-Ḥusayn, another son of ʿAlī and Fāṭima. In common with the Twelver Shiʿis, the Ismailis believe ʿAlī to be the inheritor (*waṣī*) of the Prophet and the possessor of divine knowledge passed down after him through the line of saintly Imams, the only legitimate spiritual and political leaders of the Islamic community.

The importance of ʿAlid/Fāṭimid descent may also be seen in the Maghreb outside the currents directly linked to Shiʿism. This is because of parallel developments linked to the situation in the eastern part of the Islamic world. The first of these was the search for new sources of religious and political authority after the end of the

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71   See M. García-Arenal, 'La conjonction du ṣūfisme et sharīfisme au Maroc: le Mahdī comme sauveur', *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 55-56 (1990), pp. 233-256, p. 234. For a study of the use of the title 'Fāṭimī' in the Maghreb, see M. Fierro, 'On al-Fāṭimī and al-Fāṭimiyyūn', *JSAI* 20 (1996), pp. 130-160.

72   See M. García-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform: Mahdīs of the Muslim West*, Leiden and Boston, 2006, p. 50.

73   Ibid., p. 49.

74   Ibid., p. 245.

caliphate of Baghdad. The second was the consolidation of the Sufi brotherhoods. On the one hand, this consolidation was accompanied by the growing authority of the Sufi shaykhs as key figures in the transmission of initiatory knowledge through a line starting with the Prophet and usually including ʿAlī and his descendants, the children of Fāṭima. On the other hand, the development of the popular cult of saints extended the authority of Sufi shaykhs well beyond the limits of their orders, thus significantly increasing their social influence.

The idea of an infallible guide (*imām maʿṣūm* similar to the Shiʿi idea of the divine guide represented by the Imam), whether he belonged to the prophetic family or not, had already been formulated in the Maghreb during the caliphal period, outside properly Shiʿi circles. Abū al-Qāsim Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1151), an Andalusian mystic who led a messianic revolt against the Almoravid regime, was one of the most prominent defenders of this idea.[75] ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and Fāṭima certainly had a place in Ibn Qasī's eschatology. However, he accepted that spiritual knowledge and the right to govern the Islamic community were not necessarily limited to the physical descendants of the Prophet, and were also accessible to mystics who did not belong to the prophetic family.[76] Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130), another messianic thinker, a contemporary of Ibn Qasī and founder of the Almohad caliphate (6th/12th-7th/13th century) claimed, like Ibn Qasī and probably under his influence, the status of an infallible Imam.[77] However, contrary to Ibn Qasī, membership of the prophetic family was an important condition of legitimacy for Ibn Tūmart, who apparently traced his lineage back to Fāṭima and ʿAlī through their son al-Ḥasan.[78] Some genealogies

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75   On Ibn Qasī and his thought, see M. Ebstein, 'Was Ibn Qasī a Ṣūfī?', *Studia Islamica* 110 (2015), pp. 196-232. The main work of Ibn Qasī is the *Kitāb khalʿ al-naʿlayn wa iqtibās al-nūr min mawḍiʿ al-qadamayn* ('The book on the removal of the two sandals and the taking of the light from the place of the two feet'). The text of the *Kitāb khalʿ al-naʿlayn* has been published by Muḥammad al-Amrānī, Asifī, 1997, and is also available in the PhD dissertation of David Raymond Goodrich, 'A Ṣūfī Revolt in Portugal: Ibn Qasī and his *Kitāb Khalʿ al-naʿlayn*', Columbia University, 1978, pp. 60-272.

76   Michael Ebstein, 'Was Ibn Qasī a Ṣūfī?', pp. 223-224. According to the author, whilst Ibn Qasī was undeniably a Sunni, some aspects of his thought were certainly influenced by Shiʿi and more specifically Ismaili doctrines.

77   On him, see I. Goldziher, *Le livre de Mohammed Ibn Toumert, Mahdi des Almohades*, Algiers, 1903; M. Fierro, 'Le mahdi Ibn Tumart et al-Andalus: l'élaboration de la légitimité almohade', *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 91-94 (2001), pp. 107-124; M. García-Arenal, *Messianism*, pp. 157-192.

78   The *Aʿazz mā yuṭlab* attributed to Ibn Tūmart contains a brief description of six distinctive signs of the Mahdi, one of which is specific to the descendants of Fāṭima (*min dhurriyyat Fāṭima*), the wife of ʿAlī. See Ibn Tūmart, *Aʿazz mā yuṭlab*, ʿAmmār Ṭālibī (ed.), n.p. 2007, p. 254. If one accepts the authenticity of this text, and since Ibn Tūmart was recognised as being the Mahdi himself, he thus had to fulfil this condition of descendance from ʿAlī and Fāṭima. This claim seems to be confirmed by a letter which Ibn Tūmart

of ʿAbd al-Muʾmin (d. 558/1163), the founder of the Muʾminid dynasty, who governed the Almohad empire after the death of Ibn Tūmart, placed him, on his maternal side, among the descendants of ʿAlī and Fāṭima through their son al-Ḥasan.[79]

As discussed above, the period following the end of the Abbasid caliphate was followed, in the East as in the West, by the consolidation of the authority of the saints and of the Sufi shaykhs. In the Maghreb, the fact of being a member of the prophetic family progressively acquired a particular importance in this context between the 7th/13th and the 9th/15th centuries. The *shurafāʾ* (singular *sharīf*), presumed descendants of the Prophet, usually through his daughter Fāṭima and his cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī, in association with powerful Sufi brotherhoods such as the Shādhiliyya (founded by the Moroccan sharīf Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258)) and the Jazūliyya (founded by Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Jazūlī (d. 870/ 1465)), played an increasingly important part in legitimising both spiritual and political authority.[80] Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), the famous Maghrebi historian who lived during the period, devoted many pages of his *al-Muqaddima* to his description of the Sufism of the time, influenced by the growing influence of the Shiʿi ideas and expectations of the imminent advent of a Fāṭimid Saviour (that is, a descendant of ʿAlī and Fāṭima).[81]

The Marīnids (8th/14th-9th/15th c.), the dynasty that succeeded to the Almohads in Morocco, claimed a Sharīfian lineage and made great efforts to show their respect for the prophetic family.[82] One of the most powerful Sultans of that dynasty, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī (r. 1331-1351), was compared to Imām ʿAlī in the Marīnid historical chronicles.[83] A parallel was established between the Marīnid Sultans' title of *mawlā* and the famous remark of the Prophet Muḥammad at Ghadīr Khumm: 'He who has me as his *mawlā*, ʿAlī is his *mawlā*'. It seems that the Marīnids were using the reference to ʿAlī's presumed election by the Prophet as his sole legitimate successor to legitimise their own government.[84] According to the Marīnid rewriting of the history of the foundation

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wrote to the Almoravid emir ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf, in which Ibn Tūmart describes himself, among other things, as 'al-Ḥasanī al-Fāṭimī'. See M. García-Arenal, *Messianism*, p. 182. An ʿAlid genealogy is also attributed to Ibn Tūmart by Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-ʿayān*, quoted by I. Goldziher, *Le livre*, p. 25 of the Arabic text; while Ibn Khaldūn in his *Kitāb al-ʿIbar* (*ibid.*, pp. 53-54) gives a different, purely Berber pedigree. For other sources on the ʿAlid, and more specifically the Ḥasanid lineage of Ibn Tūmart and his links to the Idrissid line, see M. Fierro, 'The Genealogies of ʿAbd al-Muʾmin, the First Almohad Caliph', *The Almohad Revolution: Politics and Religion in the Islamic West During the Twelfth-Thirteenth Centuries*, Farnham (Surrey), 2012, pp. 9-10 and footnote 24.

79   M. Fierro, 'Genealogies'.

80   See M. García-Arenal, *Messianism*, pp. 218-219, 234ff.

81   See *The Muqaddima*, English translation by F. Rosenthal, New York, 1958, chapter 3, section 51.

82   See M. García-Arenal, *Messianism*, pp. 217 ff.

83   Ibid., p. 233.

84   Ibid. For the difference between the Shiʿi and Sunni interpretations of this prophetic saying see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, 'Ghadīr Khumm', *EI3*.

of their capital, the city of Fez, Idris II, the son of the founder of Fez, had inherited the sword of ʿAlī. It was kept in one of the minarets of Fez until he would reclaim at the end of time.[85] Similarly, a conception of religious and political authority claiming membership of prophetic family and including a strong messianic element played a decisive role in the rise of the Saʿdian dynasty which ruled Morocco in the 10th/16th and 11th/17th centuries.[86]

Mystical and messianic milieus proved to be fertile soil for enhancing the figure of ʿAlī and transforming him into a powerful symbol which played a central role in various formulations of religious and political authority throughout the Islamic world, in its eastern as well as its western parts. Far from being limited to Shiʿi circles, ʿAlī was almost universally perceived to be the source of initiatory knowledge, the heir to prophetic wisdom and authority, passed after him down the line of his physical descendants and especially of his children with Fāṭima, the daughter of the Prophet. Under different guises, in various Islamic movements and in different historical, geographical and cultural contexts, the figure of ʿAlī was an important factor in the legitimising of spiritual and political power after the end of the Abbasid caliphate, and in that gradual reorganisation which led to the creation of new structures of government and, eventually, to the new geopolitical configuration of the Islamic world, at the transition from the medieval to the modern era.

85   See M. García-Arenal, *Messianism*, p. 239.
86   See M. García-Arenal, *'Mahdī, murābiṭ, sharīf*: l'avènement de la dynastie Saʿdienne', *Studia Islamica* 71 (1990), pp. 77-114.

The Presence of ʿAlī in Islamic Philosophy

Mathieu Terrier

In the intellectual and spiritual output of Islam, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the first imam of all the Shiʿis, occupies, after the Prophet Muḥammad, a special position. Contrary to the Prophet's other companions, not only were numerous remarkable acts attributed to ʿAlī, but also texts of various genres (aphorisms, speeches, poems, etc.), some of them probably authentic, others probably forged, collected in different bodies of work, which have inspired many commentaries and served many purposes. His figure and his words have endured and influenced the entire history of Islamic philosophy, including not only Hellenistic *falsafa*, but also the 'histories of the sages' and works of speculative gnosis and mysticism. And while the presence of ʿAlī in Islamic philosophy is proportionate to the importance of Shiʿism in the intellectual history of Islam, his influence has not been limited to Shiʿi intellectual circles.

The earliest sources of the declarations of ʿAlī to have been quoted and commented on by philosophers are the first Shiʿi collections of Imami *ḥadīths*, such as the *Kitāb Uṣūl al-Kāfī* of al-Kulaynī (d. 329/940-1). They contain the most esoteric utterances attributed to the imam in person, which were subsequently taken up only by Shiʿi thinkers, whereas Sunni sources attribute to ʿAlī, as a companion of the Prophet, other sayings which have no strong doctrinal content. Then there are the "ecumenical" sources, shared by both Sunnis and Shiʿis, such as the *Miʾat kalima* ('Hundred Sayings') collected by the illustrious al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 253/867);[1] the *Nahj al-balāgha*, a collection of sermons and sayings recorded by al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1016) in the Buyyid period;[2] and the collection of poems (*Dīwān*) attributed to ʿAlī, of which the principal version to have come down to us dates from the 6th/12th century.[3]

In these pages, I will be discussing the presence of ʿAlī in Islamic philosophy thematically. But it could first be useful to identify the main historical phases from the outset. The first phase runs from Baghdād under the Buyyids (4th/10th-5th/11th centuries) to Sunni Andalusia (6th/12th century) and corresponds to the golden age of Hellenistic *falsafa* where ʿAlī is mentioned in the 'history of the sages' and in the *falāsifa* themselves, whether or Shiʿi in character or not. A second phase runs from the Mongol

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1 Kamāl al-Dīn Mītham al-Baḥrānī, *Sharḥ ʿalā l-miʾat kalima*, ed. s.n., Qumm, 1427/2006-7, p. 2.

2 *Nahj al-balāgha*, ed. Ḥ. al-Aʿlamī, Beirut, 1413/1993. See Laura Veccia Vaglieri, "Sul Nahj al-Balāġʾah e sul suo compilatore al-Sharīf al-Raḍī", *AIUON*, 8 (1958), pp. 3-105.

3 Qāḍī Mīr Ḥusayn al-Maybudī, *Sharḥ-e Dīwān-e mansūb beh amīr al-muʾminīn ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib*, ed. Ḥ. Raḥmānī and I. Ashkeshīrīn, Tehran, 1390 h.s./2011, introduction, pp. 45-46. From the first *Dīwān*s attributed to ʿAlī, composed in the 4th/10th century, none have come down to us.

conquest and the end of Sunni hegemony in the Orient in the middle of the 7th/13th century, to the 9th/15th century. It is marked by the mingling of three traditions, namely philosophy, esoteric Shiʿism and speculative Sufism, an evolution in which the figure and the authority of ʿAlī play a decisive role. The third phase was in Safavid Iran in the 10th/16th-11th/17th centuries, after the establishment of Imami Shiʿism as the state religion there. This gave rise to a 'renaissance' of Islamic philosophy and the veritable 'birth' of Shiʿi philosophy, in which the presence of ʿAlī proved be one of the decisive factors.

In these different phases and different currents of thought, ʿAlī appears successively as a source of wisdom, a paragon of virtues, a master of truth, an incarnation of the perfect Man and a theophanic being, moving imperceptibly from being a historical figure to become a metaphysical entity. These aspects, which will each be examined in their turn here, have nevertheless to be understood both as moments on a continuum and to be at the same time the different facets of a polymorphous figure.

1 The Historical ʿAlī in the History of Philosophy

1.1 *The Wisdoms of ʿAlī*

From the 3rd/9th century, in the Abbassid empire, compilations of sapiential maxims or 'wisdoms' (*ḥikam*) attributed to ʿAlī began to appear; a large section of the *Nahj al-balāgha* is devoted to them. These 'wisdoms', aphorisms or gnomic sayings, are reminiscent of those attributed to the Greek philosophers in the histories of the sages written in the wake of the movement to translate Greek into Arabic in parallel with the emergence of the *falsafa*.[4] ʿAlī's name indeed appears in one of the most famous of these 'histories of sages', *al-Ḥikma al-khālida* ('The Eternal Wisdom') of the philosopher Ibn Miskawayh (d. 421/1030), a thinker with moderate Shiʿi leanings.[5] The work is an anthology of words of wisdom from five nations, the Persians, Indians, Arabs, Greeks and Muslims. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, known as 'the Prince of the faithful' (*amīr al-muʾminīn*), is considered to be, after the prophet Muḥammad, the main author of the 'wisdom of the Arabs'. The sayings attributed to him in this collection are absent from the *Nahj al-balāgha*, written at around the same time, as they are from the Imami compilations of *ḥadīth*s. There is nothing specifically Shiʿi about them, but in both form and content they do echo the aphorisms of the ancient Greeks. A few examples:

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4 On this genre and these works see M. Terrier, "Histoire de l'histoire de la sagesse en islam. Résumé des conférences", in *Annuaire EPHE, Sciences Religieuses*, t. 124 (2015-2016), 2017, p. 363-372; *Ibid.*, t. 125 (2016-2017), 2018, pp. 395-404; *Ibid.*, t. 126 (2017-2018), 2019, pp. 365-374.

5 See M. Arkoun, *L'humanisme arabe au IVᵉ/Xᵉ siècle. Miskawayh, philosophe et historien*, Paris, 1970, 2nd ed., 1982.

"Beware of him who praises you for what you are not, he will soon accuse you of what you are not."[6] An almost identical maxim is attributed to the 'father of philosophers' Hermes in Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq's anthology (d. 260/873), the first of its kind, and in later anthologies too.[7]

"The favour granted to the ignorant is like a garden planted on a dunghill."[8] This maxim, which is one of the 'hundred sayings' collected by al-Jāḥiẓ,[9] is attributed to Hermes in person by Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq and others.[10]

"Beware of this world (*aḥdharū al-dunyā*)! It is the enemy of the friends of God (*awliyāʾ Allāh*) as it is the enemy of His enemies: as for the friends of God, it afflicts them (*ghamma-hum*), and as for His enemies it deceives them (*gharra-hum*)."[11] This saying, replete as it is with typically Islamic expressions and an example of the rhetorical eloquence (*balāgha*) unanimously attributed to ʿAlī, has an ascetic and gnostic theme, in common with numerous aphorisms attributed to Greek sages, such as this one attributed to Homer: "When this world catches him who flees from it, it injures him. When this world is caught by him who yearns for it, it kills him."[12]

"All things rise in value when they are rare; as for knowledge it rises in value when it abounds."[13] This maxim, also typical of Arab rhetoric, enjoining contentment with little and the quest for knowledge, is eminently philosophical in spirit.

'The Prince of the faithful was asked about happiness (*naʿīm*). He said: "He who eats barley bread, drinks fresh water and remains in the shadows lives in happiness."'[14] The saying is reminiscent of a famous saying of Epicurus, a Greek philosopher not much valued in Islam.[15]

Ibn Miskawayh also records, from an anonymous source: "Learn to say: 'I do not know'. If you say: 'I do not know', you will be taught until you do know, but if you say: 'I know', you will be questioned until you no longer know. Among the companions of the Prophet not one said: 'Question me', except for ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, may peace be upon

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6   Ibn Miskawayh, *al-Ḥikma al-khālida*, ed. A. Badawī, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1377 h.s./1998-99, p. 110.

7   Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq, *Ādāb al-falāsifa*, ed. A. Badawī, Kuwait, 1406/1985, p. 134.

8   Ibn Miskawayh, *al-Ḥikma al-khālida*, p. 110.

9   al-Baḥrānī, *Sharḥ ʿalā l-miʾat kalima*, p. 75.

10   Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq, *Ādāb al-falāsifa*, p. 133.

11   Ibn Miskawayh, *al-Ḥikma al-khālida*, p. 111.

12   *Mukhtaṣar Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* (6th/12th century), quoted in ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-milal wa l-niḥal*, ed. M. Badrān, 2 vols., Cairo, II, p. 106; Shahrastānī, *Le Livre des religions et des sectes*, vol. II, French trans. J. Jolivet and G. Monnot, Louvain, 1993, p. 242.

13   Ibn Miskawayh, *al-Ḥikma al-khālida*, p. 111.

14   *Ibid.*, p. 112.

15   Epicurus, *Lettre à Ménécée*, § 131, in Id., *Lettres, maximes, sentences*, French transl. J.-F. Balaudé, Paris, 1994, p. 195.

him".[16] The first part of the saying alludes to famous declarations by Socrates in Plato's works;[17] the second part alludes to numerous Shiʿi traditions attributed to ʿAlī starting with the formula "Question me before you lose me!". Here Ibn Miskawayh was suggesting a link between the consensual figure of ʿAlī as a purveyor of wise sayings and the specifically Shiʿite ʿAlī, master of infallible truth.

An openly Shiʿi philosopher, Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkevarī (d. between 1088/1677 and 1095/1684), wrote the last great 'history of the sages', the *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*,[18] in which he made numerous significant comparisons between the sayings of ʿAlī and those of the ancient philosophers. Take this maxim attributed to Theophrastus, an immediate disciple of Aristotle: "Intelligence is of two kinds: one given by nature (*maṭbūʿ*), the other acquired through listening (*masmūʿ*). Intelligence given by nature is like the soil, intelligence acquired through listening is like the seed and the water. Intelligence given by nature will never produce anything unless intelligence acquired from listening drags it out of its sleep, frees it from its impediments and shakes it from its place, as the seed and the water extract what is in the bowels of the earth."[19] Ashkevarī stresses the similarity of this saying to one of imam ʿAlī, whom he calls 'the speaking Word of God' (*kalām allāh al-nāṭiq*):[20] "There are two intelligences: one given by nature, the other acquired through listening. Intelligence acquired through listening would be useless if intelligence given by nature did not exist, just as the sun is useless when the eye is deprived of vision."[21] The rhetorical and thematic similarity of both maxims are indeed striking and one may speculate – something Ashkevarī does not do – whether there is a connection between the *corpus* of the *Nahj al-balāgha* and that of the doxographies of Greek philosophers in Arabic. Mullā Ṣadrā (d. *ca* 1045/1635), the most illustrious philosopher of Safavid Iran, in his commentary on the *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* of al-Kulaynī, records the saying of ʿAlī in the same version as Ashkevarī, in support of the

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16   Ibn Miskawayh, *al-Ḥikma al-khālida*, p. 125.

17   Platon, *Apologie de Socrate*, 21c-23b, in Id., *Œuvres complètes*, dir. L. Brisson, Paris, 2011, pp. 70-72 (French translation L. Brisson).

18   On this thinker, see M. Terrier, *Histoire de la sagesse et philosophie shiʿite*. L'Aimé des cœurs de Quṭb al-Dīn Aškevarī, Paris, 2016.

19   Source of this maxim of Theophrastus in Arabic: Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-milal wa l-niḥal*, II, p. 157; *Livre des religions et des sectes*, II, p. 336. See on this subject D. Gutas, "The Life, Works and Sayings of Theophrastus in the Arabic Tradition" in W.W. Fortenbaugh *et alii* (ed.), *Theophrastus of Eresus: On His Life and Work*, New Brunswick/Oxford, 1985, pp. 63-102, included in Id., *Greek Philosophers in the Arabic Tradition*, Aldershot, 2000, art. VII., see pp. 90-91.

20   On this typically Shiʿi title, which we will encounter later, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*.

21   Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkevarī, *Maḥbūb al-qulūb, al-maqāla al-ūlā* (I), ed. I. al-Dībājī and A. Ṣidqī, Tehran, 1378/1999, pp. 318-319. In *Nahj al-balāgha, al-ḥikam*, § 339, p. 702: "There are two sciences (*ʿilmān*) …"

idea that the religious sciences (*al-sharʿiyya*), acquired through imitation (*taqlīd*) of the prophets, and the rational sciences (*al-ʿaqliyya*), proceeding from the sole natural intelligence, are complementary.[22] This leads us to consider a new aspect of the figure of ʿAlī in Islamic philosophy: his role as the defender of philosophy itself.

1.2   *ʿAlī, Defender of the Rights of Philosophy*

The historical ʿAlī is frequently appealed to as a religious authority to support the accord, or the pre-established harmony, between philosophy and revelation. In the introduction to the anthology of the Greek sages collected by Mubashshir b. Fātik (d. *ca* 480/1087), the author, probably an Ismaili Shiʿi, justifies the exercise of philosophy in Islam by tradition. Quoting the prophet Muḥammad and ʿAlī – referred to with a single eulogic formula –, he anachronistically exploits the later synonymy of the terms *ḥikma* and *falsafa* to treat their praise of wisdom as if it were a praise of philosophy. Here are two maxims ʿAlī used: "Every word of wisdom which the believing man hears, keeps for himself and offers to his believing brother, is an invaluable gift and grace"; "Wisdom is the goal of the believer; he may take it where he finds it regardless, of which vessel it comes from".[23]

In the introduction to his great history of the sages, and with the same end in mind, Ashkevarī records other maxims of the "Prince of the faithful" – also to be understood in the technical Shiʿi sense of 'the Prince of the initiated' –[24] "the wisest of all of the Arab and non-Arab sages" (*al-ʿarab wa al-ʿajam*): "Take wisdom wherever it is. If it is found in the breast of a hypocrite, it will babble in there until it leaves and finds repose with its companions in the breast of the believer"; "Wisdom is the goal of the believer. Therefore, take wisdom even from among the hypocrites";[25] "The word of the sages is a remedy when it is correct, an evil when it is false."[26]

Another frequently mentioned saying of ʿAlī is, "Do not recognize truth through men, but know the truth and you will recognize its people."[27] Its presence is significant in Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) spiritual autobiography, the *al-Munqidh min*

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22   Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, ed. M. Khājavī, 4 vols., Tehran, 1367 s.n./1988-89, II, p. 418.

23   Mubashshir b. Fātik, *Mukhtār al-ḥikam wa maḥāsin al-kilam* (Los Bocados de oro), ed. ʿA.R. Badawī, Madrid, 1958, p. 2. The second maxim is found in a different version in the *Nahj al-balāgha*, §80, p. 642, see *infra*. In *Miʾat kalima*: "Wisdom is the aim of the believer"; see al-Baḥrānī, *Sharḥ ʿalā l-miʾat kalima*, pp. 80-81.

24   On the meaning of the expression *amīr al-muʾminīn*, reserved by Shiʿis for ʿAlī alone, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *La preuve de Dieu*, p. 157 et pp. 264-265.

25   *Nahj al-balāgha*, al-ḥikam, §§79-80, p. 642.

26   *Ibid.*, al-ḥikam, §267, p. 687. Ashkevarī, *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*, vol. I, p. 104; M. Terrier, *Histoire de la sagesse et philosophie shiʿite*, pp. 189-190.

27   In the "Hundred Sayings": "Do not examine him who speaks but examine what he says"; see al-Baḥrānī, *Sharḥ ʿalā l-miʾat kalima*, pp. 68-69. The source of the version considered here is unknown.

al-ḍalāl.[28] Although in his famous *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* he condemns the main theses of *falsafa*, he explains here that there is great danger in rejecting philosophy *a priori*: "Such is the habit of weak intelligence: it recognizes truth through men, not men through truth. The intellective man (*al-ʿāqil*) follows the path of the prince of the intellective men (*sayyid al-ʿuqalāʾ*) ʿAlī, may God may be pleased with him, when he says: 'Do not recognize truth through men …'". Both in the title he is given here, and the saying that is attributed to him, ʿAlī appears as the champion who seeks truth through reason freed of all prejudice, which quite well defines the philosophical attitude.

Even more astonishing is the presence of ʿAlī as a religious and philosophical authority in the work of that most rational of Muslim philosophers, Ibn Rushd, also known as Averroes (d. 595/1198). In the *Decisive Treatise on the Harmony of the Revealed Law and Wisdom* [or *philosophy*] (*Faṣl al-maqāl fī mā bayn al-sharīʿa wa l-ḥikma min al-ittiṣāl*), he made a legal defense of philosophy against accusations of impiety made notably by al-Ghazālī. To prove that it was impossible to condemn philosophical interpretation for breaking the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of Muslims scholars on theoretical questions raised by the Quran, he declared that there never had been such a consensus. He writes, "It has been transmitted that many in the earliest days [of Islam] used to be of the opinion that the Law (*sharʿ*) has both an apparent and an inner sense (*ẓāhir wa bāṭin*) and that it is not obligatory for someone to know about the inner sense if he is not an adept in knowledge of it nor capable of understanding it. There is, for example, what al-Bukhārī relates about ʿAlī Ibn Abū Ṭālib, may God be pleased with him, saying: "Speak to the people concerning what they are cognizant of. Do you want God and His messenger to be accused of lying?""[29] Ibn Rushd quoted this saying again when summing up his '*Decisive Treatise*' in the introduction to his *Unveiling of the Methods of Proofs regarding the Dogmas of the Religion*.[30] Although in no way suspected of being Shiʿi, Averroes availed himself of the spiritual authority of ʿAlī to support his belief in the dual nature of Revelation, both exoteric and esoteric; in the need for a discipline of secrecy in the transmission of knowledge; in the refusal of any imposed orthodoxy where theoretical

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28   Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (*Erreur et délivrance*), ed. and French transl. F. Jabr, Beirut, 1969, p. 25. This saying is also quoted by Shams al-Dīn Shahrazūrī (d. between 687/1288 et 704/1305), *ishrāqī*, a philosopher we shall return to, in his *Rasāʾil al-shajara al-ilāhiyya fī ʿulūm al-ḥaqāʾiq al-rabbāniyya*, ed. N. Ḥabībī, 3 vol., Tehran, 1383h.s./2004-05, III, p. 7. A slightly different version is found in Mullā Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, ed. N. Ḥabībī, 2 vols., Tehran, 1386 h.s./2007-2008, I, p. 511.

29   Averroès, *Discours décisif*, ed. and French transl. M. Geoffroy, Paris, 1996, § 26, p. 125; Averroës, *The Book of the Décisive Treatise Determining the Connection between the Law and Wisdom, and Epistle Dedicatory*, English transl. C. Butterworth, Provo Utah, 2001, § 15, p. xx.

30   Ibn Rushd, *al-Kashf ʿan manāhij al-adilla fī ʿaqāʾid al-milla*, ed. M. ʿA. al-Jābirī, Beirut, 1998, p. 99, in a slightly different version: "Talk to men about what they understand …" (*bi-mā yafhamūn* au lieu de *bi-mā yaʿrifūn*).

questions are concerned; and finally in the rights of a philosophical interpretation of the Quran – in summary, everything that Eastern Shi'i philosophers after him will defend, whilst declaring themselves ever more strongly to be the adherents of 'Alī.

It is again as a defender, in theory and practice, of philosophy, that 'Alī intervenes in the chapter that Ashkevarī dedicated to John Philoponus, known as 'the Grammarian' (6th century). The latter is often considered by Muslim historians to be the last Greek philosopher, which is arguable, but also, through confusion with another personality, as being contemporary with the advent of Islam. With two stories in which 'John the Grammarian' appears, Ashkevarī contrasts the respective qualities of 'Alī with those of the second caliph 'Umar, a classical polemical theme between Shi'is and Sunnis, with, as its theme here, which is all the more original, their respective attitudes towards the legacy of Greece. In the first story, set after the conquest of Alexandria, John asks the governor, 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ, to return the books of wisdom confiscated from the library; but 'Amr receives the following order from the caliph 'Umar: "Regarding these books, if there is anything in them which is in agreement with the Book of God, then the Book of God dispenses us from reading it; and if there is anything in them which contradicts the Book of God, there is no need of them. Order them to be destroyed." The second story features a certain John the Patrician (al-biṭrīq) whom an official of the 'Commander of the faithful', Alī, wished to expel from the province of Fārs; John wrote to 'Alī to ask him for protection and the caliph-imam ordered his son Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya to give him a safe conduct.[31] The lesson of this story is clear: whilst 'Umar, the usurper of the caliphate, decreed the destruction of books of foreign wisdom, 'Alī, the only real 'Commander [or Prince] of the faithful', ordered that a scholar of the Greek tradition be protected.

1.3   *'Alī, Paragon of Philosophical Virtues*

While the virtues of 'Alī had from the earliest days been a theme of dialectic theology (*kalām*), Shi'i thinkers had also conferred a philosophical meaning on them. Kamāl al-Dīn Mītham al-Baḥrānī (d. 670/1280-1 or 699/1300) and Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. after 787/1385-86) employed the terms of Platonic and Aristotelian ethics to describe the character of 'Alī. The first, in the introduction to his commentary on the *Nahj al-balāgha*, lists the psychic virtues of 'Alī, emanating from those two qualities of the soul, its theoretical and practical powers.[32] 'Alī possessed, first, the perfect theoretical power, that is theoretical wisdom (*al-ḥikma al-'ilmiyya*) defined as "the perfection of the human soul by its reflection of true knowledge and its acquiescence in

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31   Ashkevarī, *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*, I, pp. 385 et 388; M. Terrier, *Histoire de la sagesse et philosophie shi'ite*, pp. 701 et 704. The first account comes from Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Ikhbār al-'ulamā' bi-akhbār al-ḥukamā'*, ed. J. Lippert, Leipzig, 1903, p. 356.

32   Kamāl al-Dīn Mītham al-Baḥrānī, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, 5 vols., Tehran, 1378 h.s./1999-2000, I, pp. 79-81.

theoretical realities to the limit of human capacity". He also possessed the perfection of practical power:

> This perfection is only found in the perfecting of practical wisdom, which is the perfecting of the soul through the perfecting of the habit of acting virtuously, so that man to be firmly settled on the right path, avoiding the two extremes of weakness and excess in all his actions. It is already proved in the science of morals that there are three capital human virtues. The first is human wisdom (*al-ḥikma al-khalqiyya*). It is the habitus (*malaka*) from which proceed acts at the just mean between ruse and naivety, those extremes of excess and weakness. ʿAlī has proved himself in this respect through his conduct in both war and in the affairs of the world. The second is temperance (*ʿiffa*). It is the habitus which proceeds from maintaining the equilibrium of the power of desire (*al-quwwa al-shahawiyya*), by dominating it by the practical intellect, according to the law of justice (*qānūn al-ʿadl*). From it proceed the acts which are at the median between apathy and indecency, the two extremes of weakness and excess. This faculty was strongly evident in [ʿAlī]. [...] The third is courage (*shajāʿa*). It is the habitus produced in the soul by moderating the power of anger (*al-quwwa al-ghaḍabiyya*) and by domination of the intellect over it. It is from it that the acts standing at the median between cowardice and temerity proceed from. The proof of the presence of this habitus in [ʿAlī] has been continuously passed down (...). Given that these three habitus are firmly proved in him, in the most perfect manner, and given that they are concomitant to the virtue of justice, the result is that the virtue of justice is firmly attested in him. As for those other parts of practical wisdom, such as political and domestic wisdom (...), he was in this matter a man of exception.[33]

This catalogue of the virtues of ʿAlī is a veritable compendium of philosophical ethics. The soul is divided, as in Plato, into three parts: the rational, the irascible and the concupiscent. Virtue is defined, according to Aristotle, as perfection born from a 'habitus' and is a middle ground between two extremes. As in both Plato and Aristotle, the cardinal virtues are wisdom, courage, temperance and finally justice, which embraces the first three.[34] As the example and model of these virtues, ʿAlī has the role of Socrates in Greek philosophy.

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33   *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.
34   Plato, *La République*, livre IV, in Id., *Œuvres complètes*, p. 1580-1611; Aristotle, *Éthique à Nicomaque*, I, 13 et II, 5, in Id., *op. cit.*, French transl. J. Tricot, Paris, 1990, pp. 80-86 et 102-105.

Ḥaydar Āmulī, well known as one of the main instigators of the rapprochement between Imami Shiʿism and Sufism,[35] drew a similar philosophical portrait of ʿAlī in an epistle justifying the attitude of the first imam, apparently so passive and resigned after the death of the Prophet. Opposing both Sunnis and Shiʿi 'exaggerators' (*ghulāt*), he bases his proof of the perfect virtue of ʿAlī on Aristotelian ethics:

> The main perfections of the soul (...) are four in number: wisdom, temperance, courage and justice. [The imam] must be characterised by them and not by the extremes of excess and weakness, which depart from the true median and the straight moral path, for this is incompatible with perfection. [...] The aim of this research (...) is to prove, to him who disputes it, that courage does not mean what he affirmed, that he who has courage is able to do whatever he wants, for this is not the meaning of courage. Rather, courage is keeping to the median without extremes (...), for being on the extremes excludes perfection, and this cannot proceed from the imam.[36]

For Mītham Baḥrānī and Ḥaydar Āmulī, the praise of ʿAlī's philosophical virtues of goes hand in hand with the affirmation of his supernatural capacities, whether theoretical, as is his vision of the world of Mystery, or practical, as are his wonders (*karāmāt*) and miracles (*muʿjizāt*), which are also rationally justified.[37] The historical ʿAlī is thus the object of a portrait with two aspects, one rational, inspired by philosophy, the other supernatural and non-rational, derived from esoteric Shiʿism, two perspectives which will prove to be complementary rather than antithetical in accounting for the knowledge attributed to ʿAlī.

1.4   *ʿAlī, Master of Truth*

As a paragon of philosophical virtues, ʿAlī evidently must possess to the highest degree, that sovereign virtue, theoretical wisdom, or, in Plato's definition, the contemplation

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35   On him, see Henry Corbin, *En islam iranien. Aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, 4 vols. Paris, 1971-1972, III, pp. 149-213; Khanjar ʿAlī Ḥamiyya, *al-ʿIrfān al-shīʿī. Dirāsa fī l-ḥayāt al-rūḥiyya wal-fikriyya li-Ḥaydar al-Āmulī*, Beyrouth, 1425/ 2004; M. Terrier, "Āmulī, Sayyid Ḥaydar", in H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Medieval Philosophy*, Dordrecht, 2018, online: https://doi.org/10.1007/ 978-94-024-1151-5_585-1. On this current of rapprochement, see M. Terrier, "The Defence of Sufism among Twelver Shiʿi Scholars of Early Modern and Modern Times: Topics and Arguments", in D. Hermann et M. Terrier (eds), *Shiʿi Islam and Sufism: Classical Views and Modern Perspectives*, London, 2020, pp. 27-63.

36   Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, *Risāla Rafʿ al-khilāf wa l-munāzaʿa*, ed. Ḥ. Kalbāsī Ashtarī, Tehran, 1396 h.s./2017, pp. 63-65.

37   Baḥrānī, *Sharḥ Nahj al-balāgha*, I, pp. 82-89; Āmulī, *Rafʿ al-khilāf*, pp. 62-63 et 112. The latter elsewhere attributes suprarational knowledge and a superhuman nature to ʿAlī: see *infra*, part II.

of true, universal and eternal Reality by the intellect. Now it is indeed as a master of truth that the historical ʿAlī is described by Shiʿi philosophers and Gnostics. There again, this wisdom has a double aspect, the rational and the non-rational, or mystical. As regards the first aspect, theological propositions are recorded which show ʿAlī to be a theoretician of both *tawḥīd* and of creation *ex nihilo*, as in this extract of the first sermon from the *Nahj al-balāgha*:

> The perfection of the proof of divine unicity is the negation of attributes (*kamāl al-tawḥīd nafy al-ṣifāt*), by contemplating each attribute as it is, in so far as it is different from the being described (...), for he who describes Him associates [something] with Him, he who associates [anything] with Him has doubled Him, he who doubles Him has divided Him, he who divides Him ignores Him (...) [God] is with all things without association and different from all things without separation.[38]

Mullā Ṣadrā refers to this text many times describing ʿAlī as 'the guide of the unitarians' (*imām al-muwaḥḥidīn*); he interprets it as meaning that the existence of the attributes is none other than the existence of the Divine Essence without adding it to itself as another existence – an interpretation he opposes to that of the Muʿtazilites who deny the meaning of the attributes.[39] His student Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1090/1679) even sees in these words of ʿAlī "proofs of the [illusory,] purely mental nature of the quiddities and of the principial, [real,] original, nature of existence" (*iʿtibāriyya al-māhiyyāt wa aṣālat al-wujūd*), that is, a scriptural confirmation of the most contested philosophical thesis of his master: the precedence of the act of being or existing over the essence or the quiddity.[40]

The most renowned philosophico-theological proposition attributed to ʿAlī is undoubtedly this aphorism with Socratic echoes: "He who knows himself [or his soul (*nafsahu*)] knows his Lord."[41] Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 908/1502), a philosopher whose late Shiʿi affiliation is subject to caution, interpreted it as follows:

> The secret, is that the obligation (*taklīf*) only relates to the knowledge of God that is commensurate with [each person's] capacity. [Men] are only required to

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38 *Nahj al-balāgha*, khuṭba 1, pp. 35-36.

39 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, I, pp. 414 and 522.

40 Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Kalimāt maknūna*, ed. ʿA. ʿAlīzādeh, Qumm, 1390 h.s./2011, pp. 31-32. On this thinker, see M. Terrier, "Anthropogonie et eschatologie dans l'œuvre de Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī: l'ésotérisme shiʿite entre tradition et syncrétisme", in M.A. Amir-Moezzi (dir.), *L'ésotérisme shiʿite*, pp. 743-780. On the ontology of Mullā Ṣadrā, see Ch. Jambet, *L'acte d'être. La philosophie de la révélation chez Mollâ Sadrâ*, Paris, 2002.

41 Baḥrānī, *Sharḥ ʿalā l-miʾat kalima*, pp. 57-58.

know Him through the attributes they are familiar with and that they observe in themselves, to the exclusion of the shortcomings borne out of this attribution to them. Given that man is made necessary by another [i.e. God], that he is knowledgeable, powerful, living, speaking, hearing and seeing, he has to believe that these attributes are found in the Reality of the Most-High, to the exclusion of the defects born of their attribution to him. [He has] to believe that [God] is necessary by His very own essence, not by another, that He is the knower of all known things, is mighty above all possibilities, and likewise for all the attributes. We do not have to believe in an attribute of the Most High of which there would be no example in us, [for] if we were obliged to, we would be incapable of truly intellectually perceiving Him. That is the first meaning of the saying of ['Alī], peace be upon him: "*He who knows himself knows his Lord.*"[42]

As regards the second, non-rational or supra-rational, aspect of his wisdom, 'Alī is described to be the ultimate source of the 'knowledge of divine proximity' ('*ilm ladunī*), an important notion in Sufism, meaning the immediate knowledge received from God through 'effusion'. In an epistle on this theme attributed to al-Ghazālī one reads:

The knowledge of proximity is given to the men of prophecy and sainthood, as happened to Khaḍir and to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, who record the following: "The Messenger put his tongue inside my mouth, then a thousand doors [or "chapters" (*bāb*)] of Knowledge opened in my heart, and inside each one, a thousand other doors"; and this: "Were the throne to be set up for me, I would take my seat on it and I would judge the followers of the Torah according to the Torah, the followers of the Gospel according to the Gospel, the followers the of the Psalms according to the Psalms and the followers of the Quran [*al-furqān*, the name of surah 25] according to the Quran."[43]

Mullā Ṣadrā *refers to* the same traditions affirming that this rank cannot be reached through human teaching, but only though divine proximity.[44] He also attributes to

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42   Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī, *Risāla ithbāt al-wājib al-jadīda*, in *Sab'a rasā'il*, ed. A. Tuyiserkānī, Tehran, 1381 h.s./2002, p. 159. On this philosopher, see M. Terrier, "al-Dawānī, Jalāl al-Dīn", in H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Medieval Philosophy*, 2019, online: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1151-5_589-1.

43   Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Risāla fī l-'ilm al-ladunī*, in *Majmū'a rasā'il al-imām al-Ghazālī*, 7 parts, Beirut, 2011, III, p. 57-74, see p. 70. Ashkevarī quotes this saying as proof of al-Ghazālī's Shi'ism in *Maḥbūb al-qulūb, al-maqāla al-thāniya* (II), ed. I. al-Dībājī and A. Ṣidqī, Tehran, 1382 h.s./2003, p. 454.

44   Mullā Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, I, p. 240.

ʿAlī this saying which Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) attributed to Abū Bakr in his *Futūḥāt makkiyya*: "I have not seen any one thing without seeing God in it", or "without seeing God before it" according to certain records,[45] held to be an evidence of true certainty (ʿayn al-yaqīn) obtained through testimonial contemplation (mushāhada).

This supra-rational aspect is illustrated by an Imami ḥadīth entitled 'What is Reality (or Truth)?' (mā al-ḥaqīqa), much appreciated by Shiʿi philosophers and Gnostics. It is an esoteric dialogue between ʿAlī and one of his closest disciples, Kumayl b. Ziyād (d. 83/702-3), considered by a number of Shiʿi thinkers to the first link in the ʿAlid initiatory chain of the Sufi orders.[46] The discourse attributed here to ʿAlī is believed by Shiʿis to be a fundamental teaching, a word of revealed truth, an object of philosophical interpretation. Ḥaydar Āmulī, a Shiʿi disciple of Ibn ʿArabī's thought, and Fayḍ Kāshānī in Safavid times, both quoted and commented on this tradition on numerous occasions.[47] But its most surprising mention is found in the *Commentary of the Book of the Wisdom of Illumination* [of Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191)] by Shams al-Dīn Shahrazūrī (d. between 687/1288 and 704/1305), a thinker known not to be Shiʿi. In the passage commented, Suhrawardī invokes prophetic ḥadīths in support of his theology of Light; Shahrazūrī adds this dialogue to them, claiming they are a new scriptural confirmation of them:

> Among the invocations transmitted by tradition: "I invoke you by the Light of Thy Face, that fills the pillars of your Throne" [prophetic ḥadīth], for the Light of His Face is the Reality (ḥaqīqa) of His Essence proceeding from the Throne with all it embraces of the luminous and the dark worlds, expressed here by the 'pillars of the Throne'. How beautiful is what is being related about this of the Prince of the faithful [ʿAlī], blessings be upon him! When Kumayl b. Ziyād asked him, "What is Reality, oh Prince of the faithful?", ʿAlī replied, "What do you have to do with Reality?" Kumayl asked: "Am I not your confidant?" ʿAlī replied, "Indeed, but what overflows from me flows over you". Kumayl: "Does someone like you disappoint him who asks of him?" ʿAlī: "No. Reality, is the unveiling of the invocations of the divine Majesty without any indication (ishāra)"; Kumayl: "Explain it to me more." ʿAlī: "It is the erasure of presumption by the truth of the known." Kumayl: "Explain to me more". ʿAlī: "It is the attraction of absolute Unity (al-aḥadiyya) by the clarity of the divine unicity (al-tawḥīd)?" Kumayl: "Explain to me more." ʿAlī:

45   *Ibid.*, I, pp. 102 and 399; Ibn ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, ed. Maktab al-buḥūth wa l-dirāsāt, 8 vols., Beyrouth, 1331-2/2010, V, p. 223. Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Kalimāt maknūna*, p. 19, has "without seeing God before it, after it and with it".

46   Ashkevarī, *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*, II, pp. 497-498; M. Terrier, "The Defence of Sufism among Twelver Shiʿi Scholars", pp. 35-40.

47   Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār* in Id., *La philosophie shiʿite*, ed. H. Corbin and O. Yahia, Tehran, 1347 h.s./1968, pp. 28-29 et p. 170; Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Kalimāt maknūna*, p. 47.

"It is a Light that illuminates from the morning of pre-eternity and whose radiance shines on the temples of monotheism." Kumayl: "Explain to me more." ʿAlī: "Put out the lamp, morning has come."[48]

Shahrazūrī concludes that sufficient proof of the Light of Lights, God, and of the distinct intellective Lights, the angels, can only be adequately expressed by the words of the sages and the prophets who are the best of men. This exchange with ʿAlī, believed to be divinely inspired, confirms the 'illuminative' philosophy of Suhrawardī.

Both aspects, rational and non-rational, of the knowledge attributed to the historical ʿAlī thus prove to be complementary rather than antithetical. So when Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/1631), the leader of the 'philosophical renaissance' of the second Safavid century, described ʿAlī as a master of arithmetic (ʿilm al-aʿdād), it was in accordance with the Pythagorean belief that the created universe is literally "written in mathematical language". The better to attribute supernatural knowledge coupled with thaumaturgical powers to ʿAlī, he continued:

> The greatest divine sages (…), who perceive the nourishment of the true realities and the flavours of the subtle entities by the sense of taste of the holy might [of their souls] (…), agree in saying that the ranks of the worlds of generation correspond to the ranks of the world of numbers, that the relationships of the generated world correspond to the numerical ratios, that the harmonies of the relationships and the mixtures of the properties of the numerical world (…) are the mirrors and the precise images of the realities of the essences of the world of generation, the measurements and the weighing scales of the ranks of the generated things in existence. If one could know the properties of the relationships and the particularities of the ranks of this world in their totality, then to him the states of the existing in their process of becoming, the quantities and modalities of past and future events would be revealed, by the grace of God. Such was the state of the sanctified soul and of the venerated essence of the Gate of the city of knowledge (bāb madīnat al-ʿilm), the Abode of the city of wisdom (dār madīnat al-ḥikma), the Inhabitant of the clay of certainty (…), that is of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and of his children and of his purified representatives […]. It is said that a Jew came to find ʿAlī and asked him, "Tell me, which number has a half, a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, a seventh, an eighth, a ninth and a tenth which are all prime numbers." ʿAlī asked him, "If I tell you, will you submit to God?" "Indeed", replied the Jew. ʿAlī said, "Multiply the number of days of the week with [the

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number of days] of the month and the result by [the number of days of] the year; you will learn the desired number" The Jew did the operation (7 times 30 times 360 = 75600) and found the number he was looking for. Then he submitted to God (that is, he converted to Islam).[49]

The knowledge of ʿAlī was said to already contain all philosophy, and even surpass it, before it became known in the realm of Islam.[50] That is also what Fayḍ Kāshānī and Qāḍī Saʿīd Qummī (d. 1103/1691), both Shiʿi traditionists before being philosophers, suggest by invoking two traditions in particular. The first, a conversation of ʿAlī with Kumayl b. Ziyād, has its source in the *Kashkūl* of Shaykh Bahāʾī (d. 1030/1620), a famous anthology of Shiʿi, Sufi and philosophical texts; it was denounced as a Sufi forgery by the traditionist Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1699).[51] In it Imam ʿAlī revises and corrects, without saying so, the psychology of Aristotle, distinguishing four souls inherent in the human soul: the vegetative soul, the sensitive animal soul, the holy rational soul and the divine universal soul (*ilāhiyya kulliyya*).[52] The second tradition, another account of the conversion of a Jew, contains an explicit mention, undoubtedly anachronistic, of *falsafa*:

> A Jew came to [ʿAlī] while he was talking to a group and asked him,
>
> "Oh son of Abū Ṭālib, if you had learned philosophy, you would be worth something." ʿAlī asked him, "What do you mean by philosophy? He whose temperament is balanced, is his mixture not pure? He whose blend is pure, is not the influence of the soul stronger in him? He in whom the influence of the soul is stronger, is he not carried to where the soul lifts him? He who is carried to where the soul lifts him, does he not acquire the ways of the soul? He who acquires the ways of the soul, does he not exist as a man and not as an animal? He who exists as a man, does he not cross the threshold of the angelic form without anything being able to divert him from that end?" The Jew said: "God is great! You have expressed all of philosophy with those words. May God be pleased with you!"[53]

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49   Mīr Dāmād, *Jadhawāt wa mawāqīt*, ed. ʿA. Owjabī, Tehran, 1380 h.s./2001, pp. 119-121.

50   Mīr Dāmād, *al-Rawāshiḥ al-samāwiyya* [commentary of the *Kitāb al-Kāfī* of al-Kulaynī], ed. Gh. Qayṣariyya-hā and N. al-Jalīlī, n.p., 1422/2001, p. 23, stresses that the 'science of the imams' came before philosophy in Islam.

51   Shaykh Bahāʾī, *Kashkūl*, ed. ʿA. al-Namrī, 2 vols., Beirut, 1418/1998, II, pp. 5-6; Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 110 vols., Beirut, 1403/1983, LVIII, p. 85.

52   Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Kalimāt maknūna*, p. 92-93; al-Qāḍī Saʿīd al-Qummī, *al-Fawāʾid al-riḍawiyya*, in *al-Arbaʿīniyyāt li-kashf anwār al-qudsiyyāt*, ed. N. Ḥabībī, Tehran, 1381 h.s./2002-3, pp. 93-95 and 100-101.

53   Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Kalimāt maknūna*, p. 94.

Fayḍ Kāshānī links this tradition to another declaration attributed to ʿAlī, whose mystical tenor recalls the ecstatic Sufism of Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922): "God has for His friends a drink. When they drink of it, they become intoxicated. When they become intoxicated, they go into a trance. When they go into a trance, they are sublimated. When they are sublimated they melt. When they melt, they are purified. When they are purified they seek. When they seek they find. When they find they reach their goal. When they reach their goal they are connected. When they are connected there is no difference between themselves and their Beloved."[54] Then this *ḥadīth qudsī*: "He who seeks Me finds Me. He who finds Me knows Me. He who knows Me loves Me. He who loves Me adores Me. He who adores Me I adore him. Him I adore I kill. Him I kill his blood money is on Me. He whose blood money is on Me I become his blood money!"[55] Once confirmed by a *ḥadīth qudsī*, this saying of ʿAlī implicitly received the status of a revealed truth.

The historical ʿAlī, master of both demonstrated and revealed truth, is also a source of direct inspiration to the philosophers through his presence after death. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī says that he composed his *Treatise of al-Zawrāʾ* (one of the names of the city of Baghdad) after he had a vision of imam ʿAlī in Najaf.[56] An ecstatic vision of imam ʿAlī and of the prophet Muḥammad, experienced in the mosque of Qumm, is also recorded by Mīr Dāmād. During the vision, ʿAlī gave him an incantatory formula (*ḥirz*) which is still appreciated by the Shiʿi *ʿurafāʾ*.[57] This living presence of ʿAlī from beyond the grave leads us to explore his metaphysical dimension.

2   The Metaphysical ʿAlī and the Metaphysics of ʿAlī

2.1   *ʿAlī in Historiosophy*

ʿAlī plays a capital role in what I call Shiʿi historiosophy, a conception of sacred history which is both cyclical and teleological, born out of the meeting of Shiʿi esotericism,

54   This tradition is already present in Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, p. 363-364; Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsāʾī (d. after 904/1499), *Mujlī mirʾāt al-munjī fī l-kalām wa-l-ḥikmatayn wa-l-taṣawwuf*, ed. R. Yaḥyā Pūr Fārmad, 5 vols., Qumm-Beirut, 1434/2013, V, p. 1682. On the function of this tradition in the strategy of the rapprochement between Shiʿism and Sufism, see M. Terrier, "The Defence of Sufism among Twelver Shiʿi Scholars", pp. 53-54.

55   Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Kalimāt maknūna*, p. 94.

56   al-Dawānī, *Sharḥ risāla al-Zawrāʾ*, in *Sabʿa rasāʾil*, p. 202.

57   The account of it is recorded by his former disciple Ashkevarī as well as by al-Majlisī: Mīr Dāmād, *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*, ed. M. Moḥaqqeq, Tehran, 1977-2016, introduction, pp. 35-37; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XCI, pp. 370-371. On this text, see H. Corbin, *En islam iranien*, t. IV, pp. 36-39; M. Terrier, "Mīr Dāmād (m. 1041/1631), philosophe et *mujtahid*. Autorité spirituelle et autorité juridique en Iran safavide Shiʿite", *Studia Islamica* 113 (2018): 121-165, see pp. 155-157.

the illuminative philosophy of Suhrawardī and the doctrine of sainthood of Ibn ʿArabī. In the introduction of his *Kitāb Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, Suhrawardī had already written, "Do not imagine that wisdom (*ḥikma*) has existed only in the recent times. The world has never been without wisdom or without a person possessing proofs and clear evidences to champion it. He is God's viceregent (*khalīfat Allāh*) on His earth."[58] And further, "The world will never be without a [sage] proficient in the deification of the self (*al-mutawaghghil fī l-taʾalluh*) (…), for the viceregency requires direct knowledge. By this authority (*riʾāsa*) I do not mean political power. For the deified Guide (*al-imām al-mutaʾallih*) may indeed rule openly, or he may be hidden – the one whom the multitude call 'the Pole' (*quṭb*). He will have authority even if he is in the deepest obscurity."[59] Here, Suhrawardī identifies the figures of Shiʿi Islam, the Sufi Pole and of the ideal sage of philosophy, a man "rendered similar to God as far as it is possible" according to the formula of Socrates in Plato.[60] Shahrazūrī, in his commentary on the first passage, quotes the *ḥadīth* of ʿAlī which could be at the origin of this saying:

> Divine Providence (*al-ʿināya al-ilāhiyya*), having required the existence of this world, also requires its integrity. Now this integrity passes through the sages who are establishers of revealed laws and by the self-deified sages practising speculation (*al-ḥukamāʾ al-mutaʾallihīn al-bāḥithīn*). The earth can therefore not lack one or some of them, providing the proofs of God to those who are worthy of it and who are in need of it. It is they who preserve the world and its pillars, it is through them that its order is perpetuated (…) and that the outpouring of the Creator (*fayḍ al-bārīʾ*) is conjoined with it.[61] […] As ʿAlī, may God honour his face, has beautifully described them at the end of one of his sermons, "Knowledge (*ʿilm*) would die if its carriers were to die. But the earth is never devoid of a man

58   Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, *Kitāb Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, in Id., *Œuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, tome ii, ed. H. Corbin, Paris/Tehran, 1952, 2nd ed. 2001, p. 11; Shihāboddīn Yaḥya Sohravardī, *Livre de la sagesse orientale*, French transl. H. Corbin, Paris, 2003, p. 89; *The Philosophy of Illumination*, ed. and English transl. J. Walbridge and H. Ziai, Provo, Utah, 1999, p. 2, translation slightly modified.

59   Suhrawardī, *K. Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, p. 12; *Sagesse orientale*, p. 91; *The Philosophy of Illumination*, p. 3, translation slightly modified.

60   Plato, *Théétète*, 176a, in Id., *Œuvres complètes*, p. 1933 (French translation M. Narcy); on this theme, see P. Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?*, Paris, 1995, pp. 341-346; C. Jambet, "'S'assimiler à Dieu dans la mesure du possible' (*Théétète* 176b): un impératif platonicien dans son interprétation en philosophie islamique", *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie*, t. cxi, nº 4, Paris, 2017. The identification of the Shiʿi Imam with the Pole is also affirmed by Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī who does not seem to have been influenced by Suhrawardī; see *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, p. 223.

61   The Arabic *fayḍ*, "effusion" or "emanation", translates the notion of *próodos* of the Neoplatonists Plotinus and Proclus.

who provides the proofs of God, whether he be manifest or veiled or fearful and oppressed, so that the proofs of God and His evident testimonies may never be abolished. How many [of these men] are there? Where are they? They are the least numerous and the most esteemed of God; their concrete essences (*aʿyān*) are lost but their images (*amthāl*) are present in our hearts. God preserves His proofs in order for them to transmit them to their peers and store them in the hearts of those like them."[62]

Ibn Abī Jumhūr (d. after 904/1499), the last thinker of the rapprochement between Imami Shiʿism, philosophy and Sufism before the establishment of Imami Shiʿism as the state religion in Safavid Iran, gives great importance to this tradition.[63] He attributes to the "men of gustative wisdom among the illuminist sages, from the father [of the sages] the great Hermes to the last", the doctrine by which "divine Providence, having required the existence of this world, also requires its integrity. [...] It is through them that its order is perpetuated and that the outpourings of the Creator are joined to it". From this he concludes that "the perennity of the material species necessarily results from it, according to the argument of divine Providence, the perennity of the lieutenancy of God and of His lieutenant, who is the divine sage (*ḥakīm ilāhī*) who penetrates both the mysteries of the deification of the self and of speculation."[64] Ibn Sīnā or Avicenna (d. 428/1037), in his *Metaphysics of the Shifāʾ*, had already deduced from the divine Providence the necessity for the existence of a prophet and that he be a man;[65] the argument is extended by Suhrawardī and his commentators, whether overtly Shiʿi or not, to the imams, poles and divine sages, of which ʿAlī is the *exemplum*. Ibn Abī Jumhūr explains the providential function of ʿAlī in terms borrowed from both *falsafa* and from Shiʿi and Sufi esotericism:

62   Shahrazūrī, *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, p. 24; Suhrawardī, *Sagesse orientale*, pp. 248-249. This tradition of ʿAlī, another exchange with Kumayl b. Ziyād, is recorded by *Nahj al-balāgha*, *al-ḥikam*, §147, p. 661, with modifications; see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Seul l'homme de Dieu est humain. Théologie et anthropologie mystique à travers l'exégèse imamite ancienne", in Id., *la Religion discrète*, pp. 209-228, citation pp. 227-228.

63   On this thinker, see W. Madelung, "Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsāʾī's Synthesis of Kalām, Philosophy and Sufism", in Id., *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam*, London, Variorum reprints, 1985, art. n° 13; S. Schmidtke, *Theologie, Philosophie und Mystik im zwölferschiitischen Islam des 9./15. Jahrhunderts. Die Gedankenwelten des Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsāʾī (um 838/1434-35 – nach 906/1501)*, Leiden, 2000; M. Terrier, "Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsāʾī", in H. Lager-lund (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*, 2018, online: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1151-5_588-1; Id., "The Defence of Sufism among Twelver Shiʿi Scholars".

64   Ibn Abī Jumhūr, *Mujlī*, III, pp. 1102-1103. Another echo of Suhrawardī, *K. Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, pp. 11-12; *Sagesse orientale*, pp. 90-91.

65   Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhiyyāt al-shifāʾ*, ed. G.C. Anawati and S. Zayed, Beirut, 1960, p. 365.

"[ʿAlī] is the door through which one enters towards Him [God]. With [ʿAlī] the knowledge of [God] is achieved". This means (…) that divine Providence demands the existence of perfect individuals who are the loci of manifestation of His effects in action, the substrates of His theophanies (*tajalliyātihi*), the orients of His names. They are the doors and the paths leading towards Him, by knowing them and learning from them the secrets that God has placed in them. For it is through them that the knowledge of the sage (*al-ʿārif*) attains its perfection; he finds refuge in his knowledge of the reality of their divine service (*al-taḥaqquq bi-l-ʿubūdiyya*), with the secrets and effects made manifest in them and by them. [...] These perfect men become for that purpose a locus of manifestation of all the servants, for all is accomplished through them. It is through them that one prays, through them that one knows. They are the models of everything and it is on them that everything is regulated.[66]

ʿAlī is here hypostatised into a theophanic being, an archetype of the perfect Man, endowed with an initiatory function as the final cause of knowledge and of the service of adoration. Ibn Abī Jumhūr, commenting on remark of Suhrawardī (see above), repeats that this function, contrary to that of the Prophet, is independent from the exercise of political power: "Whether political power (*al-siyāsa*) is in his hands, in such a way that it is manifest, with an extended hand, or in the hands of another, he is the guardian of the esoteric order (*al-amr al-bāṭinī*) without which the exoteric (*al-ẓāhir*) cannot be accomplished."[67] So in the transhistorical attributes of the imam, pole or sage, there is the sign of the historical figure of ʿAlī, which is of abstention or political powerlessness.

Ibn ʿArabī's conception of sainthood or of the divine Alliance (*walāya*) also had a major influence on the historiography of late Shiʿi thinkers. It is well known that for Shiʿi esotericism, after the sealing of prophecy with Muḥammad, the cycle of *walāya*, the imamate of ʿAlī and his successors had begun.[68] Ibn ʿArabī, on his side, posited a distinction between absolute or universal (*muṭlaqa*) Alliance, coming about in pre-eternity (*al-azal*) and continuing into post-eternity (*al-abad*), and the defined (*muqayyada*) Alliance of Muḥammadan Law; and affirming the existence of a 'seal of Alliance' (*khātam al-walāya*) analogous to the 'seal of prophecy', Muḥammad, he identified the seal of absolute Alliance with Jesus and suggested that he himself was the seal of the defined Alliance.[69] Ḥaydar Āmulī, in his commentary on the *Fuṣūs al-ḥikam*, accepted

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66   Ibn Abī Jumhūr, *Mujlī*, IV, pp. 1344-1345.
67   *Ibid.*, p. 1520.
68   H. Corbin, *En islam iranien*, t. I; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*.
69   Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. ʿA. ʿAfīfī, Beirut, 1423/2002, pp. 62-64; Id., *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, 8 vols., Beirut, Dār al-fikr, 1431-2/2010, I, pp. 447-448.

the idea of the double Alliance and of the double seal but contradicted Ibn ʿArabī: the seal of absolute Alliance can be none other than ʿAlī and that of the determined Alliance none other than the twelfth imam al-Mahdī.[70] This attribute of ʿAlī is based on *ḥadīth*s of the Prophet quoted *ad libitum*: "What God created first was the Intellect"; "What God created first was my light"; "ʿAlī and I were one light in the hands of God"; "I was a Prophet when Adam was still between water and clay"; and of ʿAlī: "I was the Ally [of God] when Adam was still between water and clay."[71]

Finally, the role of ʿAlī in Shiʿi historiosophy appears in all the *Maḥbūb al-qulūb* of Ashkevarī, a monumental history of wisdom in three books (*maqāla*), the first on the pre-Islamic sages, the second on the sages, philosophers and mystics of Islam and the third on the Shiʿi imams and religious scholars. The first book begins with the Adam's witness at the moment of his creation to the ontological and theological precedence of ʿAlī, and ends with the account, seen above, of the caliph ʿAlī's kindness to the last Greek philosopher. The second book concludes with a eulogy to a whole series of Sufi masters, true philosophers and disciples of the imams, who derived their knowledge from the historical ʿAlī. The third book starts with the miraculous birth of ʿAlī and concludes with a declaration that his metaphysical essence is the principle and the end of the movement of existence and in which he is identified with the 'dot under the *bā* of [the formula] *bi-smi-llāh*.'[72] This leads us to the consideration a new dimension of ʿAlī, cosmic and anthropological, albeit still metaphysical.

2.2   *ʿAlī in Cosmic Anthropology and Anthropogony*

In countless philosophical works, written mostly, but not only, by Shiʿi authors, there is a conception, Pythagorean in origin, of man as the 'small world' or microcosm (*ʿālam ṣaghīr*) and of the universe as the 'big man' or *macranthropos* (*insān kabīr*). This theory, first proposed in Islam by Jābir b. Ḥayyān (3rd/9th century), the Ikhwān al-ṣafā (4th/10th century) – two collectives of Shiʿi obedience – and Ibn ʿArabī, was largely digested and further developed by Imami philosophers in Safavid Iran. All link this conception with the Akbarian concept of the perfect Man or universal Man (*al-insān*

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70   Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, *Naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ*, ed. M. Bidārfar, 3 vols., Qumm, 1394 h.s./2015-16, I, pp. 271-341, included and summarized by Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Kalimāt maknūna*, pp. 189-190. See on this issue H. Corbin, *En islam iranien*, III, pp. 197-200.

71   Āmulī, *Naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ*, III, pp. 1794 et 1802-1803, index s.v. *awwalu mā khalaqa Allāh…, kuntu anā wa ʿAlī…, kuntu nabiyyan wa Ādam…, kuntu waliyyan wa Ādam…*. See also, among many other possible examples, Ibn Abī Jumhūr, *Mujlī*, V, pp. 1915 and 1920, Index s.v. idem; al-Ḥāfiẓ Rajab al-Bursī, *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn fī ḥaqāʾiq asrār amīr al-muʾminīn* ed. ʿA. Ashraf al-Māzandarānī, Qumm, 1384 h.s./2005-06, pp. 501 and 508, Index s.v. idem; Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Kalimāt maknūna*, pp. 189-190. On the pre-existence of ʿAlī and the imams, see also M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Guide divin*, partie II, pp. 73-112.

72   See M. Terrier, *Histoire de la sagesse et philosophie shiʿite*, pp. 91-95, 111-115, p. 249, pp. 277-278, 726-727.

al-kāmil) by identifying him with ʿAlī, or rather with his metaphysical entity, theophany and receptacle of the divine Effusion. These speculations on the man-microcosm often, and even systematically, referred to some verses attributed to the historical ʿAlī, considered in this respect to be authentic (whilst the apocryphal character of the *Dīwān* is no secret). Kamāl al-Dīn Mīr Ḥusayn Maybudī (d. 909/1503-04), author of a commentary on the *Dīwān* whose affiliation to the Shiʿi is doubtful, quotes the following:

> Your remedy is in you and you do not understand it,
> Your sickness is of you but you do not see it
> It is you who are the visible book whose letters manifest the hidden
> You who claim only to be a little body, the great world is enveloped in you[73]

The philosopher Mīr Dāmād, who does for once refrain from citing these verses, nevertheless accepts this cosmic anthropology by placing ʿAlī at its centre, in his commentary on a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet recorded by the sixth imam and deemed to be perfectly authentic: "ʿAlī is the example among you [or: in my community] of the verse, 'Say: "He is God, He is One" in the Quran'" (112:1).[74] Relying on an analogy dear to Ḥaydar Āmulī, between the book of God, the book of the 'horizons' or of the world, and the book of the soul or of man (– see Quran 41: 53 "We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in their souls" …) – Mīr Dāmād writes:

> The rational human soul, accomplished in both its knowledge and its practice, is at the highest level of its perfection, that of the highest rank of acquired Intellect, for it is in itself alone, within the limits of that rank, an intelligible world (*ʿālam ʿaqlī*) comprising the whole world of existence, alike it in its gathering together of all things, a book of lucid synthesis, like that universal Book which is the order of the worlds of existence (…). That is why it is said that the truly cognisant man (*al-insān al-ʿārif*) is the macrocosm, and that the whole world is the micranthropos. […] [ʿAlī] declares in the language of his spiritual state (*bi-lisān ḥālihi*) what is expressed by "Say: He is God, He is One" in the language of words. Now the language of the spiritual state is the clearest and its testimony the most eloquent. That is why this saying has wetted his tongue (to say): "This [Quran] is the silent Book and I am the speaking Book". ʿAlī is this the surah *al-Ikhlāṣ* ('the

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73   Maybudī, *Sharḥ-e Dīwān*, p. 456 and 458. Among countless occurrences in the works of Shiʿi philosophers: Shaykh Bahāʾī (Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī), *al-Arbaʿūn ḥadīthⁿ*, Qumm, 1431/2009-2010, p. 205, verse 1 and 3; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, IV, p. 334; Ashkevarī, *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*, I, pp. 229-230; Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Kalimāt maknūna*, p. 134.

74   Mīr Dāmād, *Sharḥ ḥadīth tamthīl al-imām ʿAlī bi-ṣūrat al-tawḥīd*, in *Muṣannafāt Mīr Dāmād*, vol. 1, ed. A. Nūrānī, Tehran, 1381 h.s./2003, p. 563; Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XXXIX, p. 270.

fundamental religion') or *al-Tawḥīd* ('the divine unicity') [Quran 112] in the book
of the world, he is an intelligible and clear book, like the book of the system of
existence.[75]

In this text Mīr Dāmād here brings Shiʿi esotericism and Avicennism together. The
concept of Alī as the 'Speaking Book of God' (*kitāb allāh al-nāṭiq*), the hermeneut of
the Quran, without whom it would remain a 'dumb book',[76] is of course derived from
the Shiʿi doctrine. From Avicenna he takes the belief that the perfection of the ratio-
nal soul consists in its becoming an intelligible world.[77] As he writes (in Persian) else-
where, quoting the end of Avicenna's *Metaphysics of the Shifāʾ*:

> The perfect sage (…), deified and sanctified (*motaʾalleh motaqaddes*) (…), hav-
> ing achived in his second nature the most perfect portion possible of acquired
> intellect, becomes an intelligible world comparable to the synthetic order of the
> universe (…). Whether he has the attributes of prophecy, or the mission of the
> lawgiver, or of the sealing of prophecy (*khātimiyyat*), or the rank of the testa-
> mentary mandate (*veṣāyat*), or the heritage of the seal of prophecy (*verāthat-e
> khātim al-nubuvva*) (…), he is God's lieutenant upon earth; and as our predeces-
> sor as the master of Islamic philosophy, he said (…) "he becomes almost a human
> Lord (*rabban insāniyyan*) and to serve him would be lawful after that of God
> Most-High".[78]

Mentioned above by Ashkevarī, the *logion* of ʿAlī which most inspired Shiʿi Gnostics
and philosophers in the field of anthropology and anthropogony, lent itself perfectly to
Neoplatonist interpretations and to esoteric speculations, and combined hermeneu-
tics with the 'science of letters', is the following: "I am the dot under the *bāʾ*, that is, the
bāʾ of *bi-smi-llāh* ['in the name of God']."[79] Āmulī based his belief in the consubstan-
tiality of ʿAlī with the 'Muḥammadan Light', the first created being, on this and other
traditions, and to make the link with the historical ʿAlī, wrote:

> In essence, the secrets of the *bismillāh* are not likely to be fixed and put into
> writing. Of this level of reality, it is said: "Existence (*wujūd*) was manifest from

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75   Mīr Dāmād, *Sharḥ ḥadīth tamthīl al-imām ʿAlī bi-sūrat al-tawḥīd*, pp. 563-564.

76   On this subject see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le Coran silencieux*.

77   Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhiyyāt al-Shifāʾ*, p. 425.

78   Mīr Dāmād, *Jadhawāt wa mawāqīt*, pp. 20-21. Quotation in Arabic in the text: Ibn Sīnā,
      Ilāhiyyāt al-Shifāʾ, p. 455.

79   Quoted notably by Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, pp. 411 and 563; Rajab al-Bursī, *Mashāriq anwār
      al-yaqīn*, p. 31; Ibn Abī Jumhūr, *Mujlī*, IV, pp. 1340-41 and p. 1504; here: Epilog, n. 6.

the *bāʾ* of *bi-smi-llāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*"; and it is said: "By the *bāʾ*, existence has manifested itself, and by the dot [under the *bāʾ*], the servant (*al-ʿābid*) has been distinguished from the Lord (*al-maʿbūd*)". The Prince of the faithful (...) says: "I am the dot under the *bāʾ*" for he is like the dot with regard to the first concretisation (*al-taʿayyun al-awwal*) which is the veritable Muḥammadan Light, by virtue of the word [of the Prophet]: "What God created first was my light called *al-raḥīm*" and his [other] saying: "ʿAlī and I are from one single light". Indeed, the Prophet is like the *bāʾ* and ʿAlī is like the dot underneath it, for the *bāʾ* becomes a reality only with it and through it, just as the Prophet achieves his perfection only with and through the Alliance (*walāya*), even though the Ally [the Imam] (*walī*) is inferior in rank to the Prophet. This is what the Prince of the faithful [or the initiates] indicated when he said: "Knowledge is a dot that the ignorant multiply". This means that the veritable science is a dot or that the access to real science depends on the knowledge of this dot as well as of modalities of its manifestation, of its loci of apparition and of its ranks; but the ignorant ones multiplied it, ignoring and rejecting his companion [ʿAlī]. "*And to whomsoever God assigns no light, no light has he*." Quran 24:40[80]

Ibn Abī Jumhūr uses the same traditions to describe the cosmogonic and gnoseological status of ʿAlī. His argument draws on the Neoplatonic double theme of emanation from the One (*próodos*) and of the conversion or return to the One (*epistrophé*). He also hints at one of the most esoteric, secret and sacred theses of Shiʿism: the superiority of the knowledge of the Imam over that of the Prophet:

He one who wishes to know the horizons [the world] necessarily has to know the first given and its reality, which is with the *bāʾ* and its dot. That is why ʿAlī says: "Science is a dot which the ignorant multiply". This knowledge follows two paths: either it goes from unity towards multiplicity, from the principle to the end, following the path of descent and manifestation (*ẓuhūr*); or it proceeds from multiplicity towards unity and from the end towards the principle, following the way of elevation and of interiority (*buṭūn*). [...] Of the knowledge that he received from the dot of existence during the night of his celestial ascension (*laylat al-miʿrāj*), the Prophet said: "I learned all the forms of knowledge from the first and the last" (...). And of the knowledge he had of them himself ʿAlī said: "I am the dot under the *bāʾ*," and "Ask me about what is under the Throne."[81]

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80   Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, pp. 563-564.
81   Ibn Abī Jumhūr, *Mujlī*, IV, pp. 1338-1339.

Ibn Abī Jumhūr also links this *ḥadīth* and the historical person of ʿAlī as the source of initiatory chains, which include not only the imams and the 'pillars of Shiʿism', but also Sufi masters, considered, according to Suhrawardī, to be "philosophers in the real sense."[82] ʿAlī appears here again as the alpha and omega of historiosophy, the history of both wisdom and sainthood:

> He who says, "I am the dot under the *bāʾ*, is ʿAlī and none other of all the perfect ones. This is said of him by greatest companions such as Salmān, Abū Dharr, Kumayl b. Ziyād,[83] and his children have recorded it from him in a long sermon called 'the sermon of glory'" (*al-iftikhāriyya*), in which he says something even more tremendous: "I am the face of God, I am the side of God, I am the hand of God, I am the speaking Quran, I am the truthful demonstration, I am the preserved Table, I am the same supreme Pen (…), I am the dot under the *bā* …".[84] Sacred intelligence bears witness to the truth of it. Every intellective man recognizes through his intelligence that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is the prince of the unitarians (*sayyid al-muwaḥḥidīn*), the pole of the real Gnostics (*quṭb al-ʿārifīn*), their head and their guide. Al-Shiblī, Junayd, Maʿrūf al-Karkhī[85] (…) and other masters have plunged into the ocean of his knowledge and of his testimony. Furthermore, every spiritual pilgrim (*sālik*) is affiliated to him and to his pupils; whoever has no relationship to his initiatory mantle (*khirqa*) does not enter this community [of Sufis]. […] This dot may designate the dot of Prophecy or the dot of the divine Alliance attributed to the Prophet and ʿAlī, for both universal and absolute Prophecy, and universal and absolute Alliance, are reserved to those two beings and this by virtue of the saying of the Prophet, "I was a Prophet when Adam was still between water and clay", and of the saying of ʿAlī, "I was an Ally when Adam was still between water and clay". Both are indissociable, as is proved by the intellect, tradition, revelation and testimony.[86]

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82   Suhrawardī, *Kitāb al-Talwīḥāt al-lawḥiyya wa l-ʿarshiyya*, in *Œuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, tome I, ed. H. Corbin, Paris/Tehran, 1952, pp. 73-74.

83   Salmān al-Fārisī (d. *ca* 35/655-6), Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (d. 32/652-3) and Kumayl b. Ziyād, loyal companions of ʿAlī, are also held to be transmitters of his spiritual teachings to the Sufis. See M. Terrier, "The Defence of Sufism among Twelver Shiʿī Scholars", pp. 35-44.

84   This proposition is however absent from the known version of the "sermon of glory" (*khuṭbat al-iftikhār*). On this sermon and similar ones, see *infra*, nn. 87-90.

85   The mystics Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/946), Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298/911), Maʿrūf al-Karkhī, (d. 200/815), are held to be direct or indirect disciples of the imams; see M. Terrier, "The Defence of Sufism among Twelver Shiʿi Scholars", pp. 35-44.

86   Ibn Abī Jumhūr, *Mujlī*, IV, pp. 1340-1342.

The 'sermon of glory' quoted and commented on here is one of the sermons described as "theo-imamosophical" by M.A. Amir-Moezzi.[87] These sermons consecrating ʿAlī as both subject and object of the sermon on the perfect Man, are rejected as 'extremist' forgeries by rationalist Shiʿi jurists-theologians, but considered to be authentic by Shiʿi Gnostics such as Rajab al-Bursī (d. after 813/1410-11), who quotes them at length;[88] Ḥaydar Āmulī, who links them to the ecstatic sayings (shaṭḥiyyāt) of such Sufi masters as Ḥallāj;[89] Fayḍ Kāshānī, who, in Safavid times, quotes them to affirm the truth of the 'science of proximity' against the authority of ijtihād, the rational interpretation of the Law by jurists-theologians.[90]

One last meditation on the ḥadīth on the dot under the bāʾ is a witness to the longevity of the theme of the cosmogenic ʿAlī in Shiʿi philosophy. It is the work of Mīr Dāmād, who quoted it alongside other ḥadīths discussed above in support of an idea which linked Avicennian metaphysics, Akbarian theosophy and the esoteric 'science of letters':

> It is known that in the world are inscribed the letters of a book. The raw material is the dot, analogous to the numerical unit. The first element is the *alif*, analogous to the numerical one; it denotes the divine Order, the merciful Breath (*nafas-e raḥmānī*), the initiating Influx (*taʾthīr-e ebdāʿī*). As for the *bāʾ*, which is the first development of the *alif*, it occupies the place of the first Intellect, which is the first being originating from the original Order and the first letter of the explicit Book of the universal system of being. Thanks to his familiarity with the light of the essential realities, the secret of the noble saying of the speaking Book of God [ʿAlī] [is known]: "I am the dot under the *bāʾ*", after the truth which [Muḥammad,] the Seal of Messengers and Prince of the universe (…) spoke was made manifest; "What God created first was the Intellect", "What God created first was my light", and also "ʿAlī and I are one single light."[91]

87   M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine I. Remarques sur la divinité de l'imam", in Id., *La Religion discrète*, pp. 89-108; here chap. 4.

88   Rajab al-Bursī, *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn*, pp. 309-321. On this thinker, see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "*Al-Durr al-thamīn* attribué à Raǧab al-Bursī", *Le Muséon* 130 (1-2), 2017, pp. 207-240; here chap. 8; M. Terrier, "Bursī, al-Ḥāfiz Rajab al-", in H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Medieval Philosophy*, 2018, online: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1151-5_586-1.

89   Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, pp. 205-206. These words of ecstasy, in which the mystic identifies himself with God, are translated as "locutions théopathiques" by Louis Massignon (*Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane*, Paris, Le Cerf, 1999 (reprint)), and "paradoxes inspirés" by Henry Corbin (introduction to Rūzbehān Baqlī Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ-e shaṭḥiyyāt*, ed. H. Corbin, Paris – Tehran, 1966, pp. 1-46, see pp. 10-19).

90   Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Kalimāt maknūna*, pp. 197-201.

91   Mīr Dāmād, *Jadhawāt wa mawāqīt*, pp. 189-190. For the two first tarditions cited, see Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, I, p. 97; and for the third, *Ibid.*, XXXV, p. 34.

The cosmogonic function of ʿAlī and his role in historiosophy give him a prominent place in the philosophical eschatology which Fayḍ Kāshānī found to be consistent with the original Shiʿi esotericism:

> The destruction of this world (al-dunyā) occurs only in the absence of the perfect Man from it and the creation of the other world (al-ākhira) occurs only through his existence in it. Indeed, the sole purpose of the existence and the subsistence of the world is the perfect Man and the just Imam who is the lieutenant of God on His earth, just as the purpose of the organisation of the body (taswiyat al-jasad) is the [existence of the] rational soul (al-nafs al-nāṭiqa) [in it]. As the body perishes and disappears when the rational soul separates from it, so God (…) only reveals himself in these lower worlds through an intermediary; with the interruption of this mediation, the influx (imdād) which, coming from Him, enables the existence and the perfection of this world, is interrupted. […] The Prince of the faithful [or the initiated] says: "The earth is never deprived of a man administrating the proof [of God], be he manifest and known or fearful and unknown."[92]

So ʿAlī, the 'speaking book' (al-kitāb al-nāṭiq), is identified with the speaking or rational soul, as necessary to the survival of the world as is the soul to the survival of the body. In this belief Shiʿi imamology and philosophical anthropology are united or harmonised. And ʿAlī, the subject and object of this doctrine, is seen to be the ontological and philosophical proof of the existence of God.

2.3　　ʿAlī, Human Lord and Divine Man

If the Islamic notion of the perfect Man or the universal Man has its roots in Shiʿism as well as in philosophy and in Sufism, its identification with ʿAlī is very specifically the work of Imami philosophers of the lkhānid and Safavid periods.[93] According to Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā, it was Ibn Sīnā who was the first to have seen in the person of ʿAlī, the Divine Man or Godman in the Platonic sense of the term: "The master and the head of the philosophers of Islam, Abū ʿAlī Ibn Sīnā, in his Treatise of the Celestial Ascension (risālat al-miʿrāj), says, 'The Prince of the faithful ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib – blessings be upon him – is the centre of wisdom, the sphere of true reality, the

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92　Fayḍ Kāshānī, Kalimāt maknūna, p. 140. The first part of this utterance is borrowed from a Sufi Sunni commentator of Ibn ʿArabī: ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492), Naqd al-nuṣūṣ, ed. W. Chittick, Tehran, Tehran, 1380 h.s./2001-2, pp. 96-97. For the ḥadīth attributed to ʿAlī, see supra n. 62.

93　Pierre Lory and M. Terrier, "al-Insān al-kāmil: l'Homme parfait dans la culture arabe classique", in H. Touati (ed.), Encyclopédie de l'humanisme méditerranéen, Brill, 2017, online: http://encyclopedie-humanisme.com/? insan-kamil-248.

treasure of the Intellect. He was already among the companions [of the Prophet] as is the intelligible in the middle of the sensitive (*ka-l-maʿqūl bayna l-maḥsūs*)."[94]

Mīr Dāmād later pursued this idea by quoting the conclusion of the *Metaphysics of the Shifāʾ*, albeit slightly modified: "The deified man having achieved perfect theoretical wisdom through the holy faculty and having assumed the powers of prophecy almost becomes a human Lord to serve whom would be akin to serving God. He is the sovereign of the earthly world and the lieutenant of God in this world."[95]

The theophanic, deified or, to put it more simply, divine character of ʿAlī is also sustained by the speculations of Shiʿi thinkers on the divine Names.[96] Rajab al-Bursī, in particular, plays on the similarity in Arabic between the name ʿAlī and the divine Name 'the Most High' (*al-ʿAlī*), and also on the notion of the indivisibility of the name and the person named:

> Considering the [divine] Names and the Attributes, we find no name more eminent than these three: the Name of the Essence, the Name of the Attributes, and the Name which is the secret of the Essence and the spirit of the Attributes. [It] is the Word which permeates all existing brings; it is the secret of the Essence as well as of the Attributes; it is through it that the engendered are acted upon. The Name of the Essence is *Allāh*; it is the sanctified Name, the proper name of the Essence of the True One. The Name of the Attributes is 'the One, the Unique One' (*al-aḥad al-wāḥid*), and it is *Muḥammad*. The Name that is the spirit of the Attributes and the secret of the Essence is ʿAlī; he is the Light of lights. Every one of these names is the supreme Name. The Name of Majesty is the sanctified and venerated Name [*Allāh*]. The Name *Muḥammad* is the exoteric form of the supreme Name (…). The Name ʿAlī is the exoteric form of the esoteric and the esoteric form of the exoteric (*ẓāhir al-bāṭin wa bāṭin al-ẓāhir*); it is thus the supreme Name of essential Reality, as it combines the secret of divine Lordship, the secret of Prophecy, the secret of divine Alliance, the secret of Power and of Royalty, the secret of the world of Omnipotence and of divine Supremacy, the secret of divine Free Action. This is declared by the word of God: "*His is the loftiest likeness in the heavens and the earth*" (Quran 30:27), and he is ʿAlī, blessings be upon him.[97] […]

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94   Mīr Dāmād, *Nibrās al-ḍiyāʾ wa tiswāʾ al-siwāʾ fī sharḥ bāb al-badāʾ wa ithbāt jadwā al-duʿāʾ*, ed. Ḥ.N. Eṣfahānī, Tehran, 1374 h.s./1995 p. 31; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, vol. I, p. 466. The work mentioned here is not the Persian *Miʿrāj-nāmeh* attributed to Avicenna, it is probably an apocryphal writing.

95   Mīr Dāmād, *Ibid.*, p. 31.

96   See M. Terrier, "Noms divins et hommes divins dans la gnose shiʿite imamite (VIIIe/XIVe et XIe/XVIIe siècles)", *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie*, 150/IV, 2018, pp. 335-356.

97   Rajab al-Bursī, *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn*, pp. 296-297.

Let me stress here the identification of ʿAlī with the 'secret of the divine Essence' and 'the Light of lights', a synonym of God in Suhrawardī's work. ʿAlī is identified with the perfect and complete theophanic being, expressing the esoteric and exoteric dimensions of God according to the Quran 57:3 (*"He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward"*). Bursī confirms it with an extract from a 'theo-imamosophic' sermon: 'The proof of the veracity of these speculations and of the esoteric meaning [of the verse] is found in a saying (…) of the Prince of the faithful [or the initiates] [ʿAlī]: "By my Name all engendered beings were created; in my Name have all the prophets prayed. I am the Tablet, I am the Pen, I am the Throne, I am the Pedestal, I am the seven heavens, I am the most beautiful Names and the noblest Words"'.[98]

Mullā Ṣadrā also says that the theophanic nature of ʿAlī is confirmed by his proper name: "There is a subtle distinction here: ʿAlī (…) is the perfect Man, the most perfect created being. There is no difference between him and the ally [of God] Muḥammad in the esoteric domain of Prophecy and of the divine Alliance. The perfect Man is created in the form of the Name *Allāh*; in him are the signs of the sovereignty and the power of manifestation of the Names and Attributes. God has named him with this Name from amongst the Names, taken from His own Name 'the Most High, the Highest' (*al-ʿAlī al-aʿlā*)."[99]

This philosophical deification of ʿAlī is even more explicit in an account of the heavenly ascension of the Prophet recorded by Qāḍī Saʿīd Qummī. It is said that Muḥammad, after having crossed the heavens which are the end of the world of composition [i.e. the material world], first saw the lower rank of the intellective soul (*al-nafs al-ʿaqliyya*) in the form of the Ṭūbā tree and the cedar of the limit; then the middle rank of the intellective soul in the form of camels and she-camels descending endlessly from the upper world; finally, "at the distance of two bowshots or even less, he saw a luminous human (*basharan nūriyyan*), a divine man (*insānan ilāhiyyan*) who entered the veil of light; he saw his back, like the back of the Prince of the faithful [ʿAlī]; this is the highest rank of the divine soul (*al-martaba al-aʿlā li-l-nafs al-ilāhiyya*)."[100] To see the divinity and the pre-eminence of ʿAlī proclaimed by the Prophet himself is conclusive. The celestial ascension is described philosophically as a conversion in the Neoplatonist

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98   *Ibid.*, p. 301.
99   Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, III, p. 253; on the esoteric conception of the imam by
        Mullā Ṣadrā, see Ch. Jambet, *Le gouvernement divin. Islam et conception politique du
        monde*, 2016, p. 105 et pp. 249-250.
100   Qāḍī Saʿīd Qummī, *Al-Ṭalāʾiʿ wa l-bawāriq*, in *al-Arbaʿīniyyāt*, p. 281. See translation and
        commentary in Ch. Jambet, "L'Homme parfait. Métaphysique de l'âme et eschatologie
        selon Qāẓī Saʿīd Qummī", *Annuaire EPHE, Sciences religieuses*, t. 125 (2016-2017), pp. 411-
        423, see p. 417. On the setting of ʿAlī's presence to Muḥammad during the *miʿrāj* in Imami
        traditions see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "L'imam dans le ciel. Ascension et initiation", in Id., *La
        Religion discrète*, pp. 135-150, voir pp. 136-140.

sense, an ascent of the intellective soul towards its divine principle. Already identified with the Intellect and to the rational soul, ʿAlī is now seen to be identified with the divine soul, the essence of the perfect Man, whose distinction from the intellective or rational soul, proper to man, was attributed to him in a tradition summed up above.

Finally, it is to Fayḍ Kāshānī that we owe the clearest expression of the double dimension, historical and metaphysical, anthropological and theophanic, of ʿAlī, the most revealing feature of the osmosis of Shiʿi imamology and philosophy. In a long tradition attributed to the sixth imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, who was being asked why "ʿAlī is the one who divides between paradise and hell" (*qasīm al-janna wa l-nār*), replied that, "The love of ʿAlī is faith and hatred of him is infidelity (*kufr*)", and further added, "All the prophets, messengers and faithful loved ʿAlī; all their adversaries hated both him and those who loved him."[101] Fayḍ Kāshānī, quoting an anonymous scholar comments: "What is meant by the love of the Prince of the faithful is what is inspired by knowledge of his stature (*maqām*), for it is he who guides (*yusāwiqu*) faith; it is not love for him as an individual, existing in this world for a certain time, [an individual] perceptible to the imperfect senses, but the true and divine love for him (*maḥabbatuhu al-ḥaqīqiyya al-ilāhiyya*), [the love] of his intellective universal rank (*maqāmuhu al-ʿaqlī al-kullī*) prior to the creation of men."[102]

3   Conclusion

At the end of this journey with ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib through the history of Islamic philosophy, from its beginnings to the end of the Safavid renaissance,[103] we conclude that he was no mere puppet, a convenient symbol of authority. A historical personage but, crucially, a spiritual and mystical figure, it was around him that the Greek idea of the divine sage, the very ideal of philosophy in an Islamic monotheistic world, would be renewed. This doctrine could only offend Sunni upholders of an orthodoxy founded on the pre-eminence of a mortal Prophet. So it was Shiʿi philosophers of early modern and modern Iran who give it its fullest expression.

His fundamental trait, the most philosophically significant, is the porosity, the circulation between his words and his being. The word of ʿAlī, like that of God, is ontologically performative: what he says, he does; and what he is, he says: the macrocosm, the

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101   Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Kalimāt maknūna*, pp. 182-183.

102   *Ibid.*, p. 184.

103   The study of the ramifications of these ideas about ʿAlī among Iranian Shiʿi philosophers from the 19th-20th centuries, or among the thinkers of the Shaykhi school deserves its own research.

speaking Quran, the Proof of God or the dot under the *bā'* of the *bi-smi-llāh* formula: and he is also what his name, a divine Name, says and makes of him. Like Pythagoras or Socrates in Greek philosophy, ʿAlī is present in Islamic philosophy concurrently as the subject, the object and as a source of a discourse of truths about man, the world and God. In other words, his identification in Shiʿi thought with the Divine or Perfect Man, is not only an act of faith, but also a philosophical decision. His insistent, not to say obsessive, presence in the works of the Shiʿi and non-Shiʿi philosophers and mystics discussed here, is proof both of the enduring vitality of the ancient philosophical tradition in Islam, and of the unique character of Islamic philosophy itself.

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In this index, the Arabic article "al", the abbreviation b.= ibn (i.e. "*son of*") and diacritic characters will not be taken into account in the alphabetical ordering. Furthermore, words that are too frequently used in this work (e.g., ʿAlī,Coran, Hadith, imam, islam, Shiʿism, Shiʿī, Sunnism, Sunni, etc.) do not appear in the index.